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Alexandra Feodorowna

EMPRESS OF RUSSIA.

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EMPRESS OF RUSSIA.

BY

A. TH. VON GRIMM.

TRANSLATED BY LADY WALLACE.

VOLUME SECOND.

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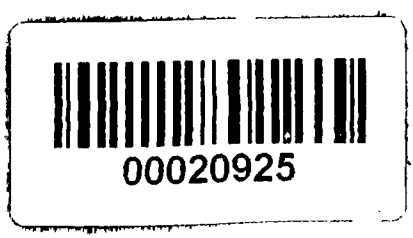
Dum vetera extollimus, recentiorum incuriosi.—TACIT.

EDINBURGH:
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.
1870.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MEMOIRS

OF

ALEXANDRA EMPRESS OF RUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE IMPERIAL COURT.

SINCE the accession of the race of Romanow to the throne till Nicholas the First, the Russian Court had undergone more changes than any other in Europe. It had been transferred from the confined Terema of the Kremlin to the Winter Palace, on the banks of the glorious Neva, where the European spirit that now prevailed had banished all stiff Asiatic forms. A glance at the Tuileries, or St. James's, or the Winter Palace, in the year 1829, would have displayed no greater difference than that of uniforms; indeed, the Winter Palace, in every respect, could boast of greater riches in art-treasures and regal pomp than either of the palaces we have referred to; it was accessible to more classes of society than the Burg in Vienna; and its denizens moved at Court without the constraint that prevails in petty German Courts. In the midst of these transfor-

mations, however, the people still regarded their Emperor and his Court as the seat of earthly power, the source of all prosperity,—approaching him with a degree of reverence bordering on idolatry. The proverb, "Alas! God is so high, and the Emperor so far," seems to be felt by the whole kingdom; for the richest and the poorest alike regard the Czar with the same eyes. Good fortune, honour, distinction, favour, are expected by all from him alone; while the evil star of each is also written there, as if in the book of fate. In the city, he who served or lived at Court was considered a chosen vessel; and when any opportunity offered to enter the palace, in the vicinity of the Imperial family, or, possibly, the cabinet of the Empress, it was considered the proudest moment of a man's life. The Winter Palace is likewise the personification of all power and pomp in the kingdom. Here are the throne, the sceptre, and crown, with their brilliant jewels; here the high church, and various chapels, where the Imperial family perform their devotions; a summer and a winter garden run parallel to each other; the most splendid rooms and corridors; apartments decorated with gold for the reception of foreign princes and ambassadors, and also for balls, and banquets, and parties. The greatest festivals of the current year, and those of private life also, are here celebrated with imperial brilliancy; and the baptism as well as the marriage of any imperial personage is here solemnized. An invited guest may wander about for hours, nay, days, in the interminable passages, halls, and apartments of this palace, discovering in every fresh room

that he enters new treasures of art, or splendour, or some sacred object. A spacious hall is here dedicated to the memory of Field-Marshals; another to the valiant Generals of the years 1812-14. The portraits of the Romanow family decorate the Hermitage, which forms the second portion of the Winter Palace, containing all the art-treasures of the realm,—pictures, antiques, gems, engravings, forming one of the richest galleries in the world. In less than fifty years were deposited here seven or eight collections, from Paris, Genoa, England, Holland, Dresden, Warsaw, and Cassel; and to the European schools of the last four hundred years Alexander the First added that of Russia, thus arousing both the talents and the emulation of the nation. In such a display of riches a Court theatre was indispensable, which, indeed, closes the long suite of rooms. This collection of objects of art is certainly accessible to the people, but not with the ease of other great cities, where they do not form part of the princely mansion. This zeal for art was but slowly developed in the public at large, and in the course of a year the Hermitage could not boast of more visitors than Dresden during the Whitsuntide holidays alone. In fact, these precious objects are rather the property of the Imperial family than of the State. The exterior, however, of this palace does not make that impression on the eye that its circumference would lead us to expect. It is in the form of a long quadrangle, with a flat roof, and round its ledge are placed statues; the outer walls are decorated with columns, and a variety of sculpture, which impart a heavy appearance rather than an im-

pressive one. Neither its grandeur nor height strike the eye as surprising; the space that surrounds it exceeds that of whole German squares, and the other adjacent buildings tend rather to weaken than to strengthen this impression. The Imperial family, among the various entrances to these apartments, have chosen the most modest of all. They inhabit the west side of the palace, opposite the Admiralty, with a limited view of the small square; but from both the corner rooms the eye embraces a wider range. One of these overlooks the Admiralty Square, the other the river, the Wilhelm's Island, the Wassili Ostrow, the stately Exchange, and, further towards Petersburg, the Gulf of Finland and its shores. The aspect of this building gives rise to different thoughts and feelings in each spectator. The Russian serf sees in it the source of unbounded wealth; the petty official, of favour; the higher born, disfavour; while the thoughtful man is reminded by it that the ruler over seventy-four millions of souls dwells there, whose power extends over the seventh part of the inhabited earth.

The society that constitutes the actual Court is modelled on that of other European ones, although the military character is here predominant. The Emperor is exclusively attended by generals and adjutants, whereas equerries and chamberlains only appear on grand festive occasions. The most illustrious Court dignitaries are alone to be seen in the vicinity of the Emperor. Twelve ladies of State, whose rank is equal to that of the first class of State officials, wait on the Empress; they are chiefly wives of the highest digni-

taries of the kingdom, and are decorated with the Order of Catherine, and with the portrait of the Empress. The maids of honour are in constant attendance on their illustrious mistress, being her daily companions. The greatness of the kingdom is manifest in this gigantic palace, and the enormous Court retinue, as well as in the budget, which probably exceeds in amount that of all other great Courts. The Court Ministers are highest in rank, and the chief of these under Nicholas was Prince Peter Wolkonsky. We must here more particularly sketch those who were attached to the Court, and whose frequent appearance there brought them into close social contact with Alexandra.

Prince Wolkonsky's office caused him daily to appear in the presence of the Empress, but seldom in the social evening circle. He had been a friend of Alexander's, and accompanied him in all his campaigns and journeys, and in his capacity of General organized the Emperor's staff. Nicholas appointed him Court Minister, a newly created office, in which the Prince displayed unusual energy in the management of various departments, and in the conscientious application of the sums intrusted to him, and in this way acquired the reputation of a hard man in the city (Prince de Pierre, instead of Prince Pierre), but won the implicit confidence of the Imperial family. He was seldom seen by them, except on business matters, which he settled with laconic brevity, and on that account appeared dry and harsh. But he was highly cultivated, and only required opportunity to prove this. His children were

educated and trained by Raupach, and his son Gregor was everywhere conspicuous by his talents and moral conduct. Another of Alexander's personal friends was Prince A. H. Galitzin, who had formed part of Catherine's Court, and endeavoured to introduce the refined courteous tone of that day into the present time. Although his exterior was not pleasing, he was a most finished courtier; full of consideration for others, kind towards the young, and, for the Court, a chronicle of wisdom and experience that he had collected from the days of Catherine to those of Nicholas. His conversation never flagged and never wearied; the most insignificant as well as the most important object acquired interest from his lips. To younger people who frequented the Court he used playfully to give the well-intended advice, to seat themselves in good time while a seat was still to be had, and never to lose the opportunity of asking for anything. His high rank and his tried fidelity, that had stood the test of many long years, made him a true and familiar friend of the Imperial family, to whom at all times he had easy access. In the absence of the Emperor he was considered the guardian of his children, whom he visited and dined with daily, and whose sports and recreations he gladly witnessed in the evening.

Another friend of Alexander's, Count Araktscheef, did not revisit the Court or the city during the reign of Nicholas. He was an energetic man, inspired with sincere zeal, but reproached by the public with two faults—want of moral culture and political integrity. His opinions were the exact opposite of those of Alex-

ander. This foe to all enlightenment lived, according to ancient Russian usages, in a wooden house, and sought relaxation from his official labours in the society of a low unprincipled woman, who ruled him, and was herself ruled by others. Alexander enjoyed the undivided love and respect of all, whereas General Araktscheef was hated by the whole nation. Russia had him to thank for founding military colonies, to insure soldiers in their old age a peaceful and honourable existence, and thus relieving the State from the burden of pensions. The result did not fulfil the hopes entertained, and Araktscheef himself admitted that he had been in error. At the time of the Emperor's last journey, he was at his country-place, Grusino, plunged in grief from his beloved having been murdered by a maid, and vowing vengeance against all whom he suspected of a share in the deed. After the death of Alexander, he went abroad for a short time, and passed the remainder of his life in solitude in Grusino, with the Emperor's bust always before his eyes, and a clock that struck only once a day—viz., the hour when Alexander died. The cadet corps of Novgorod inherited his estates, and several millions of francs.

The oldest friend of Alexander's youth, Prince Victor Kotschubei, Minister of the Interior, survived the Emperor several years, and was one of the first persons who repaired to the new Court and Government. When heir-apparent, Alexander opened his whole heart to this man, even revealing to him his secret project to renounce the throne; and no one seemed more deserv-

ing of such confidence. Noble benevolence beamed in his countenance, and refinement marked his every action; he therefore enjoyed the esteem of all officials, and was received at the Court of Nicholas with the highest distinction.

But all these men, in intellect, renown, and merit, were fairly eclipsed by another friend of Alexander's—Michael Speransky. Few characters in Russian history equalled him either in influence or in the vicissitudes of destiny. He shines in all the lustre of the noblest man in our century, and was especially remarkable in the first half of Alexander's reign. The career of this notable personage commenced with the accession of the Emperor Alexander in 1801. He won universal admiration by his talents, but the envy and ill-will of all by his birth. So far as we know, he is the only one of the many rapidly risen into greatness who was of priestly descent. Little as Russia cares about a man's birth, the more do they object to those who spring from the priestly caste. The name of Speransky was first given to him, it is said, at school, on account of his abilities. He was intended for the priesthood, and completed his education in the Ecclesiastical College at Petersburg, where he was appointed teacher of the exact sciences. He was promoted to an office in the State by Prince Kurakin, where his energies soon raised him to the highest rank; for in his thirtieth year he was already a Secretary of State in the Imperial Council, and became by degrees a personal friend of the young Emperor. It would have been hardly possible to find at that time any one in Russia who better understood or more ener-

getically supported the monarch who was to rule as a man over men. Speransky's activity as a statesman extended to every different branch of government, law-giving, and public education. His zeal in regulating everything for the best advantage of the nation and the State, recalls Pombal and Struensee, although neither possessing the obstinate tyranny of the former, nor the subtle levity of the latter. But the reforms of these three men came too suddenly, and Struensee, like Speransky, both sons of inferior priests, was considered an upstart, devoid of the ancient hereditary dignity that protected the fallen Marquis from a degrading punishment. In the very midst of his restless energies for the benefit of his fatherland, Speransky was banished from Petersburg to Nischni-Novgorod, Perm, and at length to Siberia, although indeed as Governor-General; he did not return thence to Petersburg till 1821, and passed the last years of Alexander's reign in quiet retirement; but with Nicholas's accession his active career began again; old jealousies were dead, and he was now conspicuous as the intimate friend and adviser of the Emperor. Silvery hair by this time adorned his handsome head, and in his frank, mild expression of countenance, the grave, dry statesman was less perceptible than the apostle of human progress. His honoured name sounded loud and pure as a bell through every rank of society, and in all the provinces of the kingdom; he had atoned for his too early good fortune, and his merits were in every mouth. The Russian nation was proud of possessing a man sprung from the lower class of society, and yet so renowned. His manner was gentle

and modest in public, his conversation rich in substance and intellect, without being particularly animated. Notwithstanding his polished address, he never left the impression of being a mere courtier.

General Hilarion Wassiltschikof enjoyed similar respect, both at Court and in the city, being known as a hero during the French campaigns, and held in high consideration from his upright character. He could not vie with any of those we have just named either in intellect or activity, but he possessed the best of all qualities for a man—courage to impress his convictions on others, and to carry them out in the most decided way, though in the most considerate manner. Superior to all petty jealousy and pride of birth, he addressed the Emperor, as well as the poorest who sought his house or his heart, with the same free independence. He was a jewel among the men of that day, especially in Nicholas's reign, who once declared that means failed him worthily to reward such a treasure; with his candid, clear understanding, and his warm, upright heart, he did more real service to the extensive realms and reign of his Emperor than many of his juniors whose lips were always overflowing with the good of their fatherland. He was a *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche.*

The Minister of War, subsequently Prince Tschernitschef, was equally esteemed in Nicholas's reign, as renowned by his French campaigns and his previous stay in Paris, as those we have named. He was elegant and attractive, particularly in the eyes of ladies, and contrived to diffuse a gay spirit into every company

that he entered. As Minister of War, he was the busiest man in the kingdom, and, contrary to all the usages of Petersburg, he rose every morning at five o'clock, and appeared before the Emperor at nine o'clock, often receiving officials at dinner and conversing with them, and yet snatching an hour for enjoyment in the evening.

We must add to this series the Lord High Chamberlain, Count Golowkin, the last scion of a family banished from Russia in the eighteenth century, who had been converted in England to the Reformed Church. At fifty years of age he learned Latin, and at a still more advanced period of life found amusement in the Annals of Tacitus, and after leaving Court solaced himself by his labours as Curator of the Charkow University. All these men were not only props to the new reign, but also ornaments of the evening social circles at Court; a good example, which these ministers strove to diffuse through the whole city. All, with the exception of Prince Galitzin, were men of business, whose days being occupied in troublesome labours, could not contribute much to the enlivenment of society at night, but still they appreciated the intellectual tone that prevailed in the Empress's immediate circle.

One of the most steady supporters of the new government, and the most fruitful source of social pleasures at the Court of the Empress, was Count Nesselrode, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Vice-Chancellor. His statesmanlike qualities he shared with his contemporaries Talleyrand, Metternich, and Pozzo di Borgo; but in the sense of the Aristippian philosophy, he was not only the most accomplished, but one of the wisest

men of any time; he understood the art of living, as Horace recommends in his Epistles. Equally removed from arrogance and from obsequious servility, his manner was conciliatory and propitiatory, and the most benevolent expression beamed from his large clear eyes; no offensive word ever escaped his lips, and even under the most trying circumstances he could always control himself and the words he uttered. Whether important affairs of State or merely a soirée required his presence in the palace, his quick firm step was the same; no one better knew how to combine aristocratic dignity with simplicity and modesty. Superior to the inevitable intrigues of a Court, his appearance was everywhere hailed with almost the same reverence as that of the Emperor himself. His house was a model of domestic order and aristocratic arrangement in every corner, and adorned with all that can ennoble the charm of life: the scholar found a large, well-chosen library in every branch of knowledge, and the artist the masterpieces of every school of painting dispersed in his *salons;* the musician the best instruments, and cultivated ears to listen; the number of guests at his richly-furnished table on common occasions was never under that of the Graces, and never exceeded that of the Muses; the conversation was easy, unrestrained, and all opinions had free scope. It was not experience and loyalty alone that made him the first statesman in the kingdom, but still more his profound insight into the connection of events, while the repose of character with which he examined every subject, and the mildness of his manners, especially caused the Empress to invite

him to her soirées. The family also of Count Wielhorsky deserves more particular mention here. Although of Polish origin, they had been born and educated in Russia, and in the Greek Church; the eldest brother married a Princess Biron from Courland, and was till his death one of the most conspicuous courtiers, endowed with all the agreeable qualities suitable to social intercourse. Their high birth and great wealth, as well as their rare accomplishments, caused both brothers to become favourites of the Imperial family, who admitted them at all times into their society; they left some interesting records of the hours they passed at Court. The eldest brother, Michael, was likewise the musical oracle of Russia, and his voice was decisive on all points connected with art or musical undertakings. He introduced all foreign artists at Court, suggesting to them their course when there. By his means the Russian Court remained in connection with the foreign world of art, and whoever was celebrated in Paris, Vienna, or Berlin, was shortly after heard in the Winter Palace. Michael Wielhorsky was not only the greatest connoisseur and lover of music in the Imperial realm, but himself a composer of songs, and as such not less appreciated in foreign countries than Prince Radziwill in Berlin. Both brothers were entirely devoid of the mere ambition of office, nor did they indeed interfere with grave State affairs, but by their devotion to art, they left more visible traces in the country than many men in other spheres who busied themselves for years with papers; they fostered art, and cultivated it on a grand scale. The house of Count Nesselrode offered a

greater variety of attractions than that of Count Wielhorsky, where art predominated. Countess Wielhorsky was still more admired, for she combined with all the charm of a woman the deep earnestness and knowledge of a man, as well as the watchful care of a mother. Her eldest son, Joseph, was the same whom we mentioned as the comrade of the heir-apparent. The politics of the day were as attractive to her as to Princess Lieven; it was even said at the time in Petersburg that her political views were not without influence over the Emperor. She seldom came to Court, and then appeared only in the most intimate and confidential circles; but her powers of conversation, by their variety, supplied the place of a larger society. The health of her youngest son compelled her to take frequent journeys into foreign countries, where she lived only for her maternal duties, but never failed to cultivate the society of those distinguished in art and science. In her were united the brightest qualities of a nearly extinct aristocratic world, with the simplicity of the modern burgher community; her conversation left the same profound impression on the philosopher Schelling and the historian Sismondi, as on a Roman cardinal and Prince Talleyrand. She visited in Königsberg Kant's former dwelling with as deep interest as the Coliseum at Rome, and she could converse with a merchant with as much facility and good-nature, dignity, and intellect, as in the presence of a King. But both at home and in her travels, much of her time was devoted to the education of her daughters, who never left their mother's side; for she thought this the fairest vocation of woman,

and one never to be intrusted to strangers. The precious time that other ladies of equally high rank devote to dress, and what is called the duties of society, she devoted to her home. It is true that the splendour of many other princely houses was not to be found there, but music invariably enlivened the circle, and an introduction there was granted chiefly to those recommended by the Muses. Here the master-works of our German musical composers were profoundly interpreted, not only by the first artists of the capital, but also by amateurs, among whom the younger Count Mathieu and General Lwoff shone with the greatest lustre. The German felt as if restored to his country when listening to the strains of his fatherland, while the hospitality he received, so unusual with us, made him at once feel at home.

A man whose character was most singular, and much discussed by both the people and the city, whose energy and fame were diffused over the whole of Nicholas's government, was Prince Alexander Menschikoff. All the attributes peculiar to the enlightened Slavonian were combined in him: ease in acquiring foreign tongues and foreign knowledge, quickly fathoming new circumstances, and mastering them; cool equanimity in reverses, winning men in office by kindness and benevolence, making himself popular with all his aristocratic pride, giving full scope to his unsparing brilliant wit, and thus gaining over to his side mockers and sneerers —these qualities distinguished the Prince from those we have already sketched. His sarcasm was not less dreaded than the wrath of the Emperor; but the Prince

himself feared no man, and spared no man. He had the less cause to do so, as his energy was accompanied by a princely fortune (of 14,000 serfs), and his position assured by his high birth. His manner was amiable and polite, his conversation as attractive when serious as when witty; the inferior official could rely on his favour and intercession, while his sharp arrows, justly or unjustly, always hit the lucky upstart, and hit sure too. On Nicholas's accession he was called to the management of the navy, a branch of the administration quite novel to him. After having given himself two months to learn all that was essential in his new sphere, he entered on his duties, and continued at the head of that branch of government the greater part of his life. He never lost an opportunity of obliging any one. The city became so accustomed to his witticisms that they were looked for every week as regularly as the newspapers. When one of the ministers was at the point of death, the Duke of Leuchtenberg met Menschikoff, with the words—

"Have you heard the sad news?"

"What is it?" answered the Prince.

"The minister—is dying," said the Duke, with emotion.

"My news is far worse," rejoined the Prince.

"How? Is he dead?" said the agitated Duke.

The Prince's cool reply being, "Alas! no: on the contrary; he is much better!"

His unfortunate campaign in the Crimea, which he undertook in his old age, in no degree blunted his malicious wit. When, after its close, he appeared for

a short time in Petersburg, he filled the city afresh with his sarcasms, thus almost making people forget his defeat in war. Such was the impression that the Prince made on the society at large of the capital; but in more confined and intimate circles his character was depicted as heartless and impatient of the merits of others. We close this list with Count Paul Kisselew, known to all Russia by his administration of Moldavia and Wallachia, as well as by his humanity and liberal principles. If in Prince Menschikoff the ancient Muscovite Boyar nature peeped out, in spite of all his superiority, in Count Kisselew the same benevolence was at once recognised, first manifested by him in the time of Alexander the Second, when, as Minister of the Crown domains, he sought to prepare the way for the great work of the manumission of the serfs, and to alleviate their future fate. This great statesman was appreciated by few, and his administration often severely censured. But no amount of public opinion made him falter in his work. He remained in connection with enlightened foreigners to accomplish his object, persuaded Alexander von Haxthausen to come to Russia, and to travel through that enormous kingdom, and thus succeeded in bringing to the universal knowledge of Europe many portions of a country so little known there, or indeed within Russia itself. Count Kisselew was a patriot in the antique sense of the word, who closely and clearly apprehended the present wants of his fatherland without losing sight of the future; with him, love of his country did not mean, as with too many at that time, hatred and persecu-

tion of other lands, but carefully cherishing the spirit appropriate to the time. In all periods of his fruitful life, he sought instruction and recreation in history, literature, and philosophy, and thus his mood was always equally fresh and cheerful. Almost all those to whom we have alluded were painted in Nicholas's time by the Berlin Court painter, Krüger; these admirable likenesses decorate an anteroom in the Winter Palace adjoining the cabinet of the present Emperor. The succession of individuals however, who contributed to the brilliancy of the government and court of Nicholas, are by no means exhausted by the preceding names. Many were detained by their offices at the other end of the kingdom, and rarely came to Petersburg; but we must make special mention of two of these: Prince Sergei Michaelowitsch Golitzyn, and Field-Marshal Prince Woronzow. The first resided in Moscow, the second in South Russia, and both were perfect models of high aristocratic natures. Many others passed most of their time in foreign lands as ambassadors, while some during the whole of Nicholas's reign did not enjoy a good reputation. Ambition is half the life of Russians; they are not satisfied with high rank and high class orders; admittance into the evening circle of the Empress, into the little Court theatre of the Hermitage, to the Imperial table—these are their first most eager aims; and one evening of distinction like this remains with many as a happy reminiscence for life—often, however, inducing the Empress to resolve never a second time to subject herself to such a weary task. When she was once showing to a worthy but totally

uncultivated man, a master work of Domenichino's in her cabinet—"St. John,"—he said, "A fine picture, but not very like your Majesty." The soirées of the Empress were, in her earlier years, usually passed by her guests in dancing, *petits jeux*, and cards. She did not herself, however, take any part in these, but selected some persons from the circle we have described to converse with her. She displayed to few the treasures of her intellect and spirit; so these were only appreciated by a few. She especially honoured those whose pure minds were devoid of all courtly qualities, who addressed her with open hearts, politely, but unsullied by hypocrisy, and whose frank and lively conversation excited her sympathy. At a time when the imposing personality of Nicholas, like his system of government, checked all free exchange of thought, Alexandra was ever accessible to other views; and in this consists the most admirable attribute of woman, that she rises superior to all one-sided party feeling. Many a novel or alien idea found its way through her to her husband. Those to whom we have specially alluded, although far from always agreeing with the Emperor, did not place themselves in direct opposition to him, but merely waited for a favourable moment of good humour to win him over to their projects; indeed, the greater number were of the opinion of Kleinmichel, who openly declared, that the sole law in Russia was the will of the Emperor. Very different, however, were the sentiments of Count Alexei and Countess Sophie Bobrinsky. The Countess, *née* Samoilof, had formerly been maid of honour to Maria Feodorowna; and in

associating with her had become one of the most finished specimens of female excellence of her day. The young Empress and the Countess soon discovered the affinity of their principles, while their mutual sympathies led to friendship. These sentiments were the more heartfelt and enduring, from the Countess giving up her Court office on her marriage, and thus she could no longer be influenced by any selfish interests. She frequented Alexandra's cabinet as much as the Empress did that of the Countess. It was the intercourse of two friends who felt the need of detailing to each other all that occurred on the days when they were separated. If any annoyance stole into the heart of Alexandra, she invariably confided it at once to her friend, and every happy incident likewise of her domestic life was repeated to this amiable and superior woman. The Countess appeared as rarely in the society of the capital as at Court; for the education of her two sons engrossed her whole time: her *salon* was not much frequented, but those who did go there were all people of the highest distinction. Count Alexei too was an exception among the men of his time, and of his position. Devoid of ambition, he appeared at Court for a succession of years, without any outward distinction or any official service. And yet his undertakings in the branch of industry made him more serviceable to his country than most other men. He risked his whole property to construct the first railway between Zarskoe-Selò and the capital; and his sugar manufactories were on so vast a scale that they produced a ninth part of all the sugar consumed in Russia.

He was incessantly occupied in ascertaining the discoveries of every kind made in Europe, and introducing them into Russia, so far as the state of the country would admit of it. During his journey in Germany and France, he visited all those in his own sphere, and avoided Courts and large societies. He even made known his views in evening circles to the Emperor, and with such an air of profound conviction, that, though Nicholas seldom agreed with his opinions, still he rarely contradicted them. Count Bobrinsky possessed an independence of character not so rare in Moscow among the old Russian nobility as in the Court of Petersburg; his manner resembled the simple bearing of the English aristocracy, and in true amiability and refinement few could be compared with him.

Count Kankrin, called the Colbert of Russian finance, was equally independent in mind; but, unlike Bobrinsky, Kankrin was neither courtly nor courteous, but gifted with a downright, thoroughly German solidity. His zeal, his stores of knowledge, his pure integrity and fidelity, were acknowledged by the whole kingdom; but we cannot deny that in evening society he seemed to think himself among German students. Prince Menschikoff shot his sharp witty arrows from a sure distance; whereas Kankrin with his truths hit every one right in the face as if with stones, and even brought his provincial German habits and his pipe into the Winter Palace. In the Council of the Empire itself his opponents were forced to listen to speeches that would have entailed a duel in German Universities.

But his merits were too great and too universally admitted for any one to attempt to polish his sharp angles. Even the Empress sometimes liked to listen to his conversation, which was pithy and intellectual, and formed a striking but not wholly unwelcome contrast to the usual tone of the Court.

Count Benkendorf, well known to fame in the French campaigns, and in Nicholas's day one of the most efficient and benevolent of men, as Minister of Police, had at all hours the most unceremonious access to the Imperial family. He enjoyed universal esteem, as he conducted himself in his difficult office with much consideration and forbearance. The sad circumstances under which Nicholas ascended the throne demanded a watchful eye on the part of the Government over all portions and societies of the kingdom. The Count seemed peculiarly calculated for such an employment, for he was enlightened, good-hearted, unselfish, and his manners in society most pleasing. A man in such an office, though indispensable in the early years of Nicholas's reign, must appear in the eyes of every society, however well disposed he may be, as a terrific spectre. The Emperor reposed confidence in him, and the Count justified this trust in the face of the country; and the public voice never accused him either of severity or too great indulgence, still less of indolence in action. He died in a steamboat, after a journey to some baths, shortly before reaching his country seat, Fall in Esthonia, in which he had scarcely resided as many days as he had possessed it for years; and now it became his last resting-place.

Count Pahlen too, son of a celebrated governor-general under Paul the First, was one of the military friends of the Imperial family. His tall form, his frank countenance, his firm stately step, indicated a knight of an earlier century, whose life was wholly absorbed by war. He was unmarried, and spent all his spare time in reading. He was well acquainted with the circumstances of States and societies; thus his conversation was instructive and interesting, and his opinion and his advice highly prized by all. The Emperor subsequently appointed him his ambassador to Paris. It is very remarkable that many of the most noted men in Alexander's reign died in 1826, one year later than their master. Since December 14th the health of Karamsin could not rally. Nicholas gave up to the celebrated historian a wing in the Taurus Palace, built by Potemkin, situated in the healthiest part of the city, surrounded by a splendid garden; he also placed a frigate at his disposal to convey him to the south of France, for the restoration of his health, and 50,000 rubles to defray his expenses. If in Germany such a magnificent sum should excite astonishment, it will cause still greater surprise to be told, that when Karamsin died, in June 1826, the same pension was continued for life to his remaining family. This was the Emperor's doing. The nation, however, placed his name among the first in the whole land. Alexander honoured Karamsin with his personal friendship; Nicholas endowed his family munificently; and the nation honoured him so highly that they never named his name without pride. The European nations, most renowned for their literature,

can bring forward no example of any of their great men being thus distinguished both by Prince and people.

In the same year died Chancellor Count Rumänzof, a veritable Russian Mæcenas. His palace, under the name of the Rumänzof Museum, was always open to the public. Alexander Narischkin also died, whose *bon-mots* were as numerous and as often quoted in the capital as Prince Menschikoff's witticisms; but a fresh succession of names came to light in Nicholas's reign, that continued to shine during his whole government. We specially name those afterwards raised by the Emperor to the rank of Counts—Orlof, Adlerberg, and Bludof. The two former were familiar friends of the Grand Duke Nicholas in the Anitschkow Palace, and gloriously proved their devotion and true courage on December 14th. Both had easy, pleasing manners, lively in conversation, and welcome to the Imperial family at all hours of the day. The mother of Count Adlerberg, Directress of the first Female Educational Institution, placed him, when very young, at Court, where he made acquaintance with the Grand Dukes, and stood as a friend beside Nicholas, who in his testament named him as *the one* friend he had possessed through his whole life. Count Bludof was, next to Speransky, the most practical and best-informed man to be found. His conversation was instructive, comprehensive, and intellectual, but apt to be wearisome. Nicholas when Grand Duke commenced his service under General Baron Karl J. Bistram, who treated all his subordinates with equally impartial justice, and by no

means showed any preference for Nicholas, as brother to the Emperor. The General therefore, on Nicholas's accession, requested to be allowed to resign. The Emperor, however, refused this request, thanking his former chief for his strict discipline, appointing him also Adjutant-General, and, later, Commander-in-Chief of the Guards. After the Polish campaign, the General, and also Count Sumarakow, were brought into more social intercourse with the Court. The latter had long been considered a brave officer and distinguished artillery-man, but, independent of his professional merits, he was attractive in his demeanour, well versed in European literature, and a great connoisseur in classical music. In his *salon*, like that of Count Wielhorsky, the masterpieces of German instrumental music were performed, varied by singing and dancing. Notwithstanding the extraordinary events that occurred during the four first years of Nicholas's reign, the Court, and family life connected with it, assumed a settled form, which, with few changes, continued the same for nearly thirty years. The Court stayed only the six winter months in Petersburg, and passed the summer in their various country palaces. Two of these six winter months were regularly spent by Nicholas in Anitschkow, as if in remembrance of the bright, free days of his youth, and the first happy years of his marriage. The family arrived in the city, and lived in the utmost domestic retirement in Anitschkow till December 5th. The Emperor was in the habit of driving through the town in a little one-horse sledge, Alexandra in a carriage-and-four, with two Cossacks in attendance; and she invariably drove

first to the female schools, where the pupils received her almost like a divinity.

On such occasions the Imperial banner floated over the Winter Palace, and every one knew what this signified. The capital, especially its principal street, the Perspective, assumed quite a different physiognomy on a day of this kind. All crowded towards that palace as the heart of the city, and the most brilliant equipages drove about; but the lower orders also wished again to see Father Czar and the lovely face of the Czarina. The public had indeed cause for gladness, for greater order was introduced into all public traffic; the police took care to provide tolerable pavements, and to enforce cleanliness in the most distant quarters of the town; people crowded to the theatre, far more to see the Imperial family than the play. During these first weeks, the Empress was in the habit of visiting her own intimate friends, and one of her first drives was to see Countess Bobrinsky. The arrival of the Court was welcomed as a festival in the capital, not only by the rich and the happy, but also by the sick and needy, and all who required aid and comfort; for the Imperial couple never neglected visiting the Poorhouse and the Lazarethe, to cheer the broken-hearted by their presence, to point out any deficiencies, and to supply immediate succour. The illustrious lady whom we last saw at the fête of the White Rose in Potsdam in the month of November this same year, accompanied the Emperor to a poorhouse in Wassiliostrow. The happy usually avoid places where the miseries of life in every form, both in old and young, present themselves to the eye

in so heartrending a manner. Their Majesties were conducted through those chambers of sorrow, where decaying age and forsaken children alternated with sufferers from infirmities and maladies of every description. Their visit, however, had a cheering influence on the inmates, and any real want was at once discerned by their quick eyes. Some days afterwards they sent fifty iron bedsteads to the chief of the Institution. During their visit one room remained closed, which seemed to be intended for servants. When the Emperor ordered that this should also be opened, the Director whispered to the monarch that he had avoided opening it in the presence of the Empress, as it was occupied by lunatics. But Alexandra had the courage to witness such a spectacle. Her sympathy, her unostentatious, touching goodness of heart, only increased with the depths of distress, and those present felt greater reverence on seeing her there than in all the brilliancy of her throne. It was a religious principle with the Empress to visit the miserable after grand Court fêtes, where in the pomp of majesty she had only external duties to perform to an ambitious throng, her angelic goodness being brought into contact with hearts hardened by good fortune. In the former case, an act of benevolence, however small, was received with tenfold thanks, whereas the greatest gifts to the latter did not always cause satisfaction.

On December 5th the whole family took up their quarters in the Winter Palace, the 6th of that month, Nicholas Day, being the name-day of the Emperor, and one of the most momentous of the year. We have

already noticed the importance of a name-day in Russia. The Winter Palace on this day throws open all its rooms for the purpose of friendly hospitality. The servants of State, who are near the persons of the monarch, expect much on such an occasion from the bounty of the Czar. All who, under any title, have been presented at Court, assemble on this day in the Winter Palace, in order to congratulate and pay their respects to the Emperor, when, accompanied by his whole family, he passes through the rooms on his way to church. This felicity alone, however, by no means suffices. Gifts of all sorts are expected from the generosity of the sovereign by those nearest his person, and by the most meritorious; and their ruler, in virtue of his absolute power, makes them happy by promotions, orders, and gratuities. It is by no means unusual to see thirty to forty generals made on this day, blue and red ribbons bestowed, and many raised to the rank of counts and princes; while the titles of Maids of Honour are conferred on the elder ladies of the Order of Catherine, and on the daughters of deserving men; boxes and rings with brilliants and Imperial portraits are distributed, and the Emperor's own family loaded with every kind of present. The lower orders wait before the gates of the palace, in the streets, in twenty degrees of cold, merely to catch a distant glimpse of Father Czar, and throng the lighted-up streets at night in closely-wedged crowds, to gape at the illuminations. The congratulations, however, of the Imperial relatives and the Officers of State nearest the Emperor's person take place on the previous evening, in a small familiar circle, for all these brilliant fêtes are

exhausting to their Majesties, and devoid of all real satisfaction. Even this rich horn of plenty, with its generous gifts, leaves far more people discontented than grateful, the latter frequently finding the Imperial mark of favour beneath their merits. This festival bears rather a serious than a cheerful character, less owing to the season of the year than to its inner signification. The Court procession from their apartments to the Court church, the stately high mass connected with it, and a banquet to which only the three highest classes in rank are invited; a Court ball, consisting only of a Polonaise by the Imperial family; a promenade through the illuminated streets in severe cold: all these are fatiguing duties and formalities, but ceremonies incumbent on the Czar and Czarina. The stranger, on such occasions, seeing a splendour of bright uniforms and dresses, ladies in the stately national costume, toilettes of fairy-like magnificence, often displaying all the wealth of diamonds and jewels in the whole realm, is filled with the most unbounded astonishment. Though the first four weeks are devoted by the Empress to her charitable duties, the succeeding ones are allotted to brilliant society and its obligations. The capital comprised at that period a number of wealthy families, who coveted the honour of receiving their illustrious rulers for an evening in their apartments. So long as the Empress continued to dance, such invitations were gladly accepted, and Russians know how to receive worthily such guests. Not unfrequently, the whole way from the Winter Palace to the house they were about to visit was lit up with lamps. The outer flight

of steps, and the stairs within, formed a garden of blooming flowers; and it was the same in all the *salons;* for the Empress herself a bower of camellias was usually prepared, and the most costly carpets spread at her feet. Certain families, after receiving their Majesties on an evening like this, reckoned in their yearly accounts an addition of 20,000 rubles to their usual expenditure. If it chanced that the Empress was prevented coming by indisposition, her non-appearance was attributed to pride, and thus she was compelled to perform this duty under all circumstances, especially as she saw that this hospitality was offered in the most cordial and sincere spirit; although sometimes a burden to her, at least she knew that, on her appearance, the entire success of the fête depended. Many of these houses are equal in size to the palaces of German capitals, and, in addition to other apartments, contain one hall so spacious that the whole of the numerous guests can sit down together to supper.

In the midst of this succession of fêtes, the family however reserve Christmas evening exclusively for themselves. In accordance with our German custom, Christmas-trees are lit up for the members of the Imperial House, and all are provided with gifts and surprises. On this evening the Empress appears as the mother of her children, and their playmates are summoned from all the different circles in the city, though indeed many are supplied with gifts who are not present. The parents feel the most true delight in the games of the young people, and thus cause the taste for domestic life to be diffused in the city.

New Year's Day is also a festival of rich gifts for the higher authorities. In the first years of Nicholas's reign, the evening of that day was a fête for the whole town. The palace on these occasions is not only open to the higher classes, but to the entire populace. On such evenings the Emperor becomes "Father Czar" to his subjects, and, as in days of old, all, without distinction of birth or rank, are hospitably welcomed. More than 30,000 are to be seen on that evening crowding to the palace, each returning home happy, though many bear tokens on their torn clothes of the enormous crowd. This evening offers a miniature representation not only of the whole Russian realm, but also of Europe. All European costumes are represented by the Diplomatic Corps. The splendours of the Russian kingdom by the high dignitaries, Adjutant-Generals and Chamberlains; the black coat by foreigners and petty officials; the Oriental caftan and the venerable beard by Russian merchants, and scanty clothing by serfs and fiacre-drivers; while the riches of nature are displayed by the finest pearls and diamonds, and every kind of jewels down to turquoises; the rarest French stuffs, and the furs of Siberia and the Crimea; and the most precious wines, as well as beer, meth, and quass.

Nicholas in later years allowed this festival to lapse, out of consideration for the health of his wife, as the religious services in the forenoon and the congratulations connected with the occasion alone required great strength. This day, so far as we know, was kept for the last time in 1835. In after years the celebration was transferred to the Anitschkow Palace, to

escape the tremendous crush of people, who, independent of the evening, press round the Imperial family in the morning. The servants of the family, the palace, the gardens, and the various Chancery Offices, down to the coachmen and outriders of the Empress, all maintain their right to bring their New Year's good wishes in person to the palace, and appear in gold-embroidered uniforms, filling the long gloomy corridors from one end to the other. Alexandra several times endeavoured to introduce fancy pageants, like those in Berlin, into the Petersburg Court, but with little success. Fêtes of such a nature require another society and other sympathies to contribute to the charm of life.

During the ensuing weeks, up to the close of the Carnival, their Majesties are still greater slaves to social duties. In this reign an exclusive aristocratic society was formed, who gave several balls in the course of the Carnival, at which Nicholas and Alexandra appeared and opened the fête with a Polonaise. Many other brilliant private balls were given, and the Court, even amid all the gravity of public affairs, could not close the Winter Palace to a society so devoted to dancing. The greater part of the seven quiet weeks of Lent were spent by the Court in the Anitschkow Palace, where they went for confession and communion. During this interval all theatres and balls are at an end, and the latter are very unusual even in small private circles; but for five weeks concerts of every kind prevail—indeed, in as great abundance as balls previously. A more quiet time, however, now began. Those foreign artists who appeared in the capital were invited to the

smaller evening Court circles, and handsomely rewarded. During those five weeks, too, occurred the examinations and dismissals in the female schools under the patronage of the Empress, who was invariably present on these occasions, distributing with her own hands the prizes, consisting of the Imperial cypher. The last evening of these examinations bore quite a festive character. The scholars displayed their progress in singing, pianoforte-playing, and dancing, and, besides the Court, other persons competent to judge were invited in the town. After Easter, Alexandra paid farewell visits to the different institutions we have named, and also to the neighbouring families, and, by the end of April, or at latest the beginning of May, the Court took up its abode in secluded Zarskoe-Selò.

We see from these details that the winter months in Petersburg pass in the most feverish state of excitement, and are very trying to health and strength. The continuous cold and the long nights are little calculated to fortify the vital powers. Every one regards with satisfaction the prospect of a more retired life and the advent of another season, which however only in name, alas! bears the name of Spring,—the sole charm it offers being bright evenings and twilight nights, but scarcely any of the cheerful variety of a German spring, even in the north of Germany.

Zarskoe-Selò, three German miles south of Petersburg, lies higher than that city, and can boast of purer air. Thirty years ago the little town bore the aspect of a neat village, consisting chiefly of small wooden houses with gardens. Not till Nicholas's reign were stone

houses built, inns established, and since then it has become a favourite resort in summer of many of the inhabitants of the capital. Its charm lies in the two palaces and the truly beautiful gardens that surround them. The road thither from the capital passes along a marshy plain, scarcely even producing dwarf birches and wild grasses, and where Will-of-the-Wisps alone accompany the traveller at night. The more surprising, therefore, are these truly Imperial palaces, while the parks, by their noble timber, transplant the traveller into another and more southern region. The finest oaks and limes, elms and ash-trees, stand, in their gay variety of foliage, beside the maple, the birch, and the northern pine, while during the short journey thither we seem to be in the region of Archangel; the climate, the gardens, seem to be that of Southern Germany. A person may wander about there for hours, always discovering fresh beauties in the grouping of the trees, the vivid green sward, and the dark thickets in the forest, while the fine fountains and their architecture cause even more surprise than the skilful training of Nature. The origin of this spot and garden dates from the first year after the foundation of Petersburg, but the fairy-like palace was not built till the days of the Empress Elisabeth. It gained its fame in Europe owing to Catherine's abode there. The gardens, with their superb lime-trees, extend on the south side up to the very walls of the palace, giving shade in the morning to most of the rooms. The exterior of the palace was formerly richly gilt, and in the evenings, by the light of the setting sun, looked at a distance like a palace in flames. The

interior contains more valuables than works of art. The walls of one room are entirely of amber, a second of lapis-lazuli, a third adorned with pillars of porphyry, and a side wing furnished entirely in the Chinese fashion. The centre storey consists wholly of grand State reception-rooms. Catherine the Second formerly inhabited the corner wing, and made Cameron add to it a gallery, by which she could reach the open air from her own apartments without going down into the gardens. She enlivened this unfrequented corridor by antique Grecian busts, and sought and found in the features of Plato and Demosthenes the expression of the same thoughts that she had read in their works. From this gallery the eye looks down on the most beautiful portion of the gardens, an artificial lake with islands, one of which is adorned by a rostral column to the memory of Count Orlof. Small boats and vessels and a company of stately swans traverse the still surface of the water, and various temples decorate its banks. A terrace leads from this elevation gently down into the garden, where Catherine, in her old age, used to walk alone in a simple morning dress, a warm cap on her head, and a stick in her hand, only accompanied by her pet greyhounds. Following the lake to the end, where a brook supplies it with water, and crossing a marble bridge with pillars, you come to a pyramid, an exact imitation of that of Cestius in Rome, and beside it two blocks of stone bearing French inscriptions. Here are interred both the greyhounds of the Empress, celebrated by Ségur in verse after their death. Catherine's presence is recalled in this part of the gardens, at every step, by a monument.

From the pyramid beside the lake the path runs past an artificial hillock, on which is a counterfeit castellated ruin, to a charming meadow, bounded by another acclivity, and traversed by a path. Beyond this the pilgrim in the new park perceives a Chinese village of about twelve houses, with a pagoda and a theatre. Each of these houses consists of a well-furnished family residence and a garden. It is however by no means inhabited by Chinese, but by families who everywhere accompany the Court. The pagoda, especially in the autumn, is used for evening parties and balls. In the environs of Petersburg, and in Zarskoe-Selò itself, it would be difficult to find a more charming summer dwelling than each of these houses. From thence you may wander among spacious beds of flowers, orchards, and orangeries, and suddenly find yourself in front of another artificial ruin,—a copy of the Temple of the Resurrection at Jerusalem. A narrow outside flight of steps leads through these apparent ruins to a height, where, in a closed chapel, stands Dannecker's "Christ," tender and loving, like the conceptions of the painter Carlo Dolce. This masterpiece is seldom visited, and it may be numbered among the many comparatively unknown treasures shut up in Petersburg. Adjoining this ruin is a fir-wood, in which, in spite of its numerous paths, the stranger is apt to lose his way, and to be startled by its gloom, and the cawing of innumerable rooks. The gardens extend even beyond this ancient wood, and contain many different objects worthy of inspection, such as a flock of lamas, two elephants, and a farm kept quite in imperial style. The gardens are

enclosed on all sides by hedges, and every access to them guarded, the cleanliness and order within being enforced by strict military discipline. It would require a hundred thousand men at least to fill the space. The whole population of the small town, and the Court included, seem lost, and leave scarcely a trace of their presence. Thus we feel solitary, nay, deserted, in the midst of all this pomp, and rather repulsed than attracted by its vast extent. The inhabitants of Zarskoe-Selò, therefore, usually shun it, and only the summer guests of the capital go there, in the hope of, at certain times, meeting the Imperial family. In Nicholas's reign they lived in the new Alexander Palace, the simple style of which is as characteristic of Petersburg as the old palace of Moscow. The front next the city is ornamented by a range of pillars, and the interior contains only enormous halls. The two side-wings, of vast circumference, are occupied by the Court; the Czar, the Empress, and their three daughters, inhabit the right wing; and the four sons, with their suites, the left. All the living-rooms are as simple as possible; the cabinet of the Empress is in immediate connection with the airy halls of the centre space, enabling her to walk there, when rain renders it impossible to go to the gardens. From her oriel window a flight of steps leads down into the adjoining small private garden, well fenced round—the only spot in this vast space that she can call her own.

This palace granted the illustrious lady the rest she required, and which, in the Winter Palace, was every moment broken in upon by the rolling of carriages and the bustle of the city. Here, unobserved, and

without the escort of a tiresome group of attendants, she could feast her eyes on the flowers that sprung up into bloom under her fostering care. In the morning she wrote letters and her diary on the balcony, and often came in to hear the readings held for the benefit of her sons and daughters, frequently inviting one of her friends, or some superior person, to converse with her. The first half of a Northern May is much the same as the first half of a German March, so often at this time Alexandra was confined to her apartments, warmed by stoves; but even under the influence of a troubled sky and rough weather, the pure air of the gardens was invigorating, and in the course of a few days the pallid town faces brightened. The Emperor daily drove his family in an open char-à-banc far beyond the gardens, when his joy was evident at being able, even for a few hours, once more to be the domestic father, and exempt from all the serious affairs that burdened him. He never invited men of business to his table at Zarskoe-Selò, but only those familiar friends with whom he could converse at his ease; but still more frequently he was alone with his wife and children, who dined an hour earlier, and now found their best recreation in surrounding the table in all the frolic and gaiety of youth. The mother related to these young creatures, according to the age and comprehension of each, anecdotes connected with foreign countries, Berlin and Potsdam, and of her honoured father, and her brothers and sisters, and the Emperor not unfrequently, on gloomy evenings, shared the innocent games of his children in the spacious apartments, while his greatest delight was

to devote a few minutes to painting, his favourite pursuit.

The presence of the Court, however, enlivened the immense pleasure-grounds in the vicinity of the new palace, especially towards evening. Alexandra introduced the custom of two military bands playing by turns before her windows every evening, their strains attracting the pleasure-loving public. Music is the mainspring of all elevated and noble culture, and the Greek poets, not without good reason, celebrated in verse Amphion and Orpheus, who set in motion stones and trees, and tamed wild animals. In the first years these bands played only simple parade marches, of no great musical value, still they attracted the public of the little country town, to whom they were something quite new. Gradually their *repertoires* changed into the most popular dances, and airs from new operas, then into classical overtures, and, thirty years later, every one stood still and listened, when grander and more intellectual music was performed. So great is the cultivating power that music exercises over the human mind.

These were the most peaceful six weeks of the whole year for the Court. No fatiguing fêtes occurred at this period, except the great May parade, which brought them to Petersburg for a day, although the same evening they returned to the quiet of their country residence. The Emperor walked every morning regularly from eight till nine, quite alone, in the gardens, and the Empress herself had an opportunity of going beyond the precincts of her own parterre without being

annoyed by petitioners or by the curiosity of the lower orders. Zarskoe-Selò had likewise another charm for Alexandra: she found leisure there for reading, and conversing with men who shared her tastes, and kept her regularly informed of the progress and discoveries of the day. No French or German work of importance escaped her attention—indeed, many were read by her in Zarskoe-Selò before being circulated in foreign countries. This period of comparative retirement, however, only lasted till the middle of June, when the Court went to Peterhof, where life was in every respect different.

This palace too, as its name denotes, dates from the time of Peter the Great, and offers to an observant eye a glimpse into the progress and development of Russian life within the last century. Here, still unchanged, stand the two small houses of the great Czar, in their primitive simplicity; the one called "Mon Plaisir," with a kitchen and all its appurtenances, situated close to the sea, the other "Marly," further on in the garden, beside a little lake. The few rooms in each still display the same tables and chairs that Peter the Great used, and by their peculiar make and fashion transport the thoughts to Saardam, or to the beginning of the eighteenth century. In Peter's day, no doubt, the novelty and originality of this style of furniture caused surprise, whereas now they are scarcely noticed. From the days of Peter to those of Nicholas, Peterhof has been regularly visited by the Court, but never for any lengthened period; in the beginning of Nicholas's reign not a single inn was to be found in this little town in

which a traveller could find shelter, and even the gentlemen's houses in the vicinity of the palace were in a poor condition, and more in accordance with the time of Peter than with that of Nicholas; the latter has entirely remodelled it, and by this creation bequeathed to his country the finest monument of his reign. It was the favourite abode of Nicholas and Alexandra, and Imperial magnificence was not less shown here during the short summer than in the Winter Palace at Petersburg—indeed, their stay in Peterhof offers a far more characteristic feature of Nicholas's reign than even Petersburg. Peterhof possesses one immense advantage over Zarskoe-Selò: it is situated by the sea, which at this point is miles broad, and extends to the coast of Finland, likewise offering fine views of Cronstadt and Petersburg. The warm days, the bright nights, the gardens fragrant with lime blossoms, the splendid fountains, enchant even the strangers who at this season visit Peterhof. The palace, situated on an acclivity, the road running parallel with the sea for several versts, has neither the majesty of the old nor the noble simplicity of the new palace of Zarskoe-Selò; the interior is not remarkable either for splendour or works of art; many portions are old and crumbling; the front overlooks a charming garden, enclosed by hedges, limes, and lilacs, and masses of flower-beds abound. In the centre stands a fountain, with a bronze statue of Neptune, surrounded by many other mythical figures, while *jets d'eau* murmur in every direction, and enliven the garden.

This spot has not the majesty of Zarskoe-Selò, but

it produces a more magical effect on the mind than the formal grandeur of the former. Is it the fragrant limes, the clusters of lilacs, the flower-beds, the rushing waters? We cannot say; but above all, it is the lovely season of the year in which people visit it, the bright evenings, when military bands enliven this spot with the most beautiful melodies of other lands, diffusing, in conjunction with the blossoms and flowers, a gay spirit through the gardens, inhaled by those who linger there. The pure sky, looking down on the spot at that season, makes everything appear in a more beautiful light, and pilgrims from the city, who visit the country for a day, or an evening, leave at home all their graver business. The back of the palace looks on gardens beneath, and towards the sea beyond, and the Finnish coast. The terrace leading down to the gardens forms the chief ornament of Peterhof, being the centre of all the water-works and all the fountains; in the abundance of water, in the height and power of the cascades, in the diversity of the animal forms from which they spring, and in the pomp of gold and marble, this spot is certainly the most remarkable in the world. All the running waters are collected in a marble basin, from the centre of which rises the highest *jet d'eau* out of the mouth of a prostrate gilt lion, whom the colossal form of Samson strives to subdue. This splendid group is an allegorical monument of the battle of Poltawa, gained by the Russians over the Swedes on Samson's Day, June 27th. The Empire of the Czar is typified by the figure of Samson, that of Sweden in the prostrate lion (the Swedish arms). These water-

works play day and night, for weeks and months, during the presence of the Court. Fountains are scattered all through this lower garden, and surprise and amuse the visitor by their singular shapes—some in the form of a wreath, a sheaf, or a nosegay, and some imitating fiery flames.

Until Nicholas's accession the environs of this palace were dead and deserted, in fact only an immense dusty expanse; the little town that stretches in two wings from each side of the palace resembled a common Russian village, but now transformed by the Emperor into a Paradise. The Imperial family live far from the palace (which they give up to Court officials and foreign guests), in another garden, once little better than a marshy meadow. One of the advantages of this park for them is this very severance from the other portions of the palace and the little town, and the impossibility of any stranger entering it. Here Nicholas built for himself a small burgher house, where he and all his family could just contrive to live together. It bore the name of "Alexandria," or "The Cottage." But soon it did not suffice for the increasing number of their sons, for whom little wooden villas were built close by, while Alexandra remained with her daughters in this pleasant little dwelling, that had not sufficient space even to accommodate the requisite servants, far less did it contain a cabinet where the Emperor could receive his ministers and adjutant-generals; he therefore drove every morning to the old palace, where the ministers awaited him, while all those in attendance in their turn left the old

palace for the garden, the entrance of which was well guarded by gens d'armes.

The Empress was not sufficiently protected in Zarskoe-Selo from importunate visitors, but in this country residence she enjoyed the rest her health rendered necessary. The little dwelling was half hidden by flowers, and seats placed outside, commanding the most beautiful sea views. The garden itself offered little shade, so an avenue of trees was planted on both sides of a rivulet, that runs through the recesses of the garden. The Empress was thus insensibly reminded of the poetical landscapes of Matthisson, like the pictures of Ruysdael, scarcely offering more than a quiet brook, enclosed by willows and maples—a bit of nature, modest though it be, that has the most pleasing effect on the mind in the immeasurable space of Northern plains. Here Alexandra was wont to linger alone in the early morning, or with one of her children; the more secluded the spot in so richly endowed a place as Peterhof, the dearer it was to her. Within the house everything breathed of quiet domestic life; the dining-room could only receive three or four guests in addition to the family, those being exclusively familiar friends, in the strictest sense of the word. The Greek Church, however, accompanies its followers into the greatest seclusion, and as the Imperial dwelling could not contain a chapel, one was built close to the entrance of the garden, in the new Gothic style, small but elegant, and thus the garden now included all that was required for the happiness of the Imperial couple. The environs of Petersburg in every direction are flat,

sandy or boggy, like those of Berlin, so nowhere is there a question of any beautiful landscapes, and even did they exist, the aborigines of the North would not know how to appreciate them; to them the finest forest is only fire-wood for future use—a romantic valley, accustomed to extensive plains, only stifling in their eyes. But with all this poverty of nature, Petersburg has the rare charm of a fine river, its mouth as broad as a sea, extending to Cronstadt, thus outweighing in charm both hill and valley. The most beautiful scenery seems poor without water, and therefore Zarskoe-Selò is very inferior to Peterhof, with its lovely watery mirror.

In this latter place the grandest festival of the year is commemorated on the 1st July, the day of the Emperor's birth and marriage, and, like the name-day of the Czar, a fête for the whole of the people. So long as the Empress-mother lived, this fête took place on Mary's Day, July 22d; but during the course of Nicholas's reign the 1st of July was the most splendidly celebrated. A familiar family festival and the people's fête on the largest scale were kept at the same time. We believe it took place for the first time in 1830, a short time before the July tumults in France. In that year Peterhof was exactly in the same condition in which it had been left by Alexander, the only addition being the modest cottage we have described, erected by Nicholas. But through this very deficiency in town organization, the fête acquired its quaint peculiar character. The processions of the townspeople hither bear a nomadic aspect, and the accommodation for travellers recalls

that of a warlike camp. From early dawn on this day about 4000 heavily-laden carriages are to be seen on the Petersburg high-road, so that in the capital only a few one-horse droschkys are left for the purposes of traffic; besides these trains of carriages, probably about 50,000 foot-passengers hurry forwards in every costume, from the most elegant Parisian surtout to the caftan and sheepskin. Those who are unable to come by the highway try their luck by sea, either in a steamer, very few of which however were in use at that time, or in common boats and wherries. Many of the great families repairing hither are received in the large palace or in the various houses of the nobility, but very small space can be allotted even to the ladies and gentlemen of the Court. But if the city consisted entirely of hotels, as in the frequented pilgrimages in Switzerland, it could not lodge a fourth part of the company. The few houses that can receive guests are let for weeks previously, and at prices that enable the proprietors to sit rent-free for the rest of the year. The town and the gardens present the spectacle of a vast camp, a bivouac, a mass of carriages, of large and small tents with refreshments, cook-shops, rapidly run-up booths and beer-houses, while the interior of every carriage is used by the fashionable world as a dressing-room. This bright and motley crowd dazzles the foreign spectator even more than the gorgeous illuminations at night. Thousands are still busy in the gardens preparing for the evening, while whole alleys are filled with tents which must disappear before the beginning of the evening splendours; curious spectators promenade in all directions, and

the water-works especially are surrounded by crowds. The secluded dwelling of the Imperial family remains uninvaded by all this turmoil; they hear the distant rolling of carriage-wheels, but they continue in the utmost privacy during the early morning hours. According to the Emperor's own command, the same military band that formerly welcomed the Empress on her first arrival at the boundaries of Russia takes up its place silently under her windows. As soon as she awakes she hears her first morning greeting, then a succession of her favourite pieces of music, the overture to the "Freischütz," and, as a finale, the valse that the Emperor first danced with Princess Charlotte in Berlin. During the music the Empress finishes her toilette, and enters her *salon*, where the Emperor and all her children receive her. Here await her gifts, surprises, tokens of affection of every kind, not only from the Emperor and her sons and daughters, but pieces of work from the schools under her care, and from their relatives. After an hour of pleasant conversation she goes to the garden, where meanwhile all her household petty officials are assembled, and one friendly acknowledgment on her part makes them all happy for the day. The kindest cordiality beams from the Empress's gentle eyes—indeed, her servants never see her otherwise than indulgent, even towards their faults; her magnanimous noble spirit is incapable of either anger or rancour, and therefore the congratulations of her domestics are sincere. But with the beginning of this day's celebration begins also the burden of the august lady; she is no longer simply a wife and mother; she is the orthodox, "bright

and lustrous" mother of the whole country; all the people insist on seeing her in her Imperial grandeur, and in the sanctuary of the church. Those who cannot obtain admittance into the temple at all events catch a glimpse of her driving thither. After adorning herself with all her jewels, she steps into an open carriage, and drives from the secluded Alexandria cottage to the palace church. As soon as the outriders emerge from the garden into the high-road, all press forward, and the genuine orthodox Russian probably falls on his knees as she drives past; but those in the throng who meet her benevolent glance shed tears of joy, saying that the object of their pilgrimage is accomplished. All the halls and passages in the palace leading to the church are crowded like the Winter Palace, and while she passes along on her husband's arm through the throng, adorned with gold embroidery and stars, every look of hers is as eagerly sought as by the multitude outside. The priests, too, who celebrate High Mass, are glittering on this occasion in their festive robes, and not unfrequently heaven sheds the warmest and purest sunny rays of the whole year on Peterhof. After High Mass, the grand dignitaries and all who enjoy the privilege of appearing at Court, draw near to kiss hands and to congratulate, and then the Empress appears on the balcony of the palace that overlooks the gardens, where the multitude are surging like a tempestuous sea.

All eyes are presently attracted to the spot beneath the balcony, for one of the young Grand Dukes, dressed as a soldier, is placed there as a sentinel, and presents

arms to the Empress with military precision. A drive follows in a state carriage through the grounds and the little town, and back to Alexandria.

The hosts of people from the city continue to crowd in, both by water and land. Ladies and gentlemen in closed carriages or in steamers arrive in grand gala, having no place where they can dress. The guests invited to dinner go direct to the palace, where all the gold and silver plate in the royal treasury is displayed. Thousands of guests of high rank are invited, and it costs much time and labour to decorate the tables with skill and splendour, and to arrange the places properly. The handsome liveries of the retinue of servants vie on this occasion with the uniforms of the guests. The *Fourriers* are dressed in red, not unlike the costume of the Senators, the *Jägers* in green, the Moors in their oriental attire, the running footmen with singular head-gear and black feathers, and the lackeys in gold-embroidered coats. Servants are summoned for the occasion from all the palaces, both in town and country, but although their number is legion still for this day additional attendants are required. This splendid banquet however does not boast of the presence of the Imperial family, who dine quietly in Alexandria with a few chosen friends. While on the table of the Czar, like a horn of plenty, everything is lavished that the most fastidious taste can desire, the palace is besieged by thousands, who wish to see and hear, yet in many places the booths are besieged to get hold of a roll, or a loaf of bread, or a glass of beer or meth, and many are only too glad to snatch sufficient food to enable them to wait patiently till the evening.

By five o'clock the banquet is over; and by seven the gigantic banqueting-hall and the adjacent rooms must be prepared for the ball. Little time or rest is there for those who, after the feast, must change their dresses. About seven o'clock the diplomatic corps arrive, who have been previously received with great distinction in a stately palace in the English Park. The invited guests wear Venetian cloaks over their uniforms, as at a masked ball, but the actual populace throng towards the spot in national costumes; patricians are distinguished from plebeians by being devoid of all ornaments. Shortly all countenances are lit up with expectation and delight. As soon as the Imperial family appear the band plays the National Hymn, followed by a Polonaise, after which the illustrious family linger for an hour in the different apartments amid the motley crowd, but suddenly disappear, as they must open the promenade through the illuminated gardens in a very different costume. On the 1st July, by nine o'clock, the sun is already set, and though even at midnight actual darkness has not yet set in, still the lofty trees in the gardens cast such dark shadows that the illuminations cannot fail to be successful. About 2000 workmen are in readiness at a given signal to transform, in the course of five minutes, the garden, the palace, and the fountains into a sea of living fire and diamonds. Looking down from the balcony of the palace into the gardens beneath, the water-works seem divided in a straight line by a canal into two portions; three bridges traverse the canals at certain distances, and on each of these stands a scaffolding, lit up with thousands of lamps.

The most singular shapes are displayed in the light; obelisks, pyramids, sun-flowers, stars, fans, pillars, all illuminated by lamps. On the third bridge over the canal, the name of Alexandra is blazing in dazzling white fire on a pyramid seventy feet high, while the other lights, sapphire blue, emerald green, and ruby red, form the frame-work of this solar brilliancy. Beyond the canal, a number of small ships lie on the sea, luminous with every colour of the rainbow, forming a background to this glowing perspective. A simple peasant gazing in wonder at all this splendour may well be puzzled to know whether it emanates from heaven or from the Czar! Twelve military bands are scattered through the gardens, who, with all their merits, attract little attention from the public. About ten o'clock begins the promenade of the Court from the palace, through every portion of the illuminated gardens; above a hundred invited guests follow in their train in open chars-à-banc, and now throng hither those who have been prevented during the day, by the want of a fitting costume, from entering the palace. Three great avenues intersect the length of the gardens in straight lines, and ten more the breadth at right angles. Looking down the central and widest avenue from one end to the other, it bears the aspect of a street, constructed solely of light and splendour, and in the midst of which fountains of fire rear their heads. Each of the intermediate sides and cross paths offers a surprise—pure astonishment scarcely permitting the spectator to feel that he is shoved about, pushed here and there, and impeded by a perfect stream of human beings. The principal charm

lies in the manifold variety of the fiery meteors, and the dark background of the wood behind; in the waving of the tops of the trees, their leaves seeming to be turned in curiosity towards the light of the fiery fountains dispersed through the gardens; and lastly we honour the intellect of man that can thus command fire and water, light and darkness, in such fantastic forms, uniting the most conflicting elements; and for some hours at least constructing such singular palaces by their means. It seems a luminous city, its streets enlivened by throngs of people, whose gay inhabitants have taken refuge in the rustling obscurity of the wood; at midnight the masses of fire are gradually extinguished, the crowds disperse, and many seek shelter and a sleeping-place in their carriages; while others remain enveloped in their caftans or sheepskins, and lie about in the now dark garden, but the chief portion of the spectators return on foot, or by sea, or in carriages, to Petersburg. This festival is not only attended by Russians, both from the city and the interior of the country, but very frequently by Englishmen, who arrive in steamers, land at Petersburg, quitting it on the ensuing day. It is possible to collect more vast crowds in London and Paris, in Vienna and Berlin, but nowhere else can such a motley manifold spectacle be seen, embracing every phase; the Emperor, as the father of his people and the chivalrous husband of his wife; the splendour of his riches, and the revival of the ancient Boyars in all their brilliancy, form a striking contrast to the primitive poverty of the peasants; it is as if the characteristics of a previous age placed themselves side by side with the grandeur

of the nineteenth century. Next day Peterhof still harbours an unusual number of guests, admiring the various beauties of the gardens, and enjoying the beauties of the different spots, but the lower orders are almost all gone, and yet the object of the greatest curiosity is only accessible on this day: the garden of Alexandria, and the Emperor's private dwelling. Here, however, strictly speaking, there is nothing remarkable to be seen, and the public themselves, like the Doge of Genoa in Versailles, form the most noteworthy object. The retirement is enlivened by music from four o'clock, but all are thronging towards the house. The Imperial family come out after dinner into the open air, and are gazed at by the public in silent devotion, as something sacred. They seat themselves, still in bright daylight, at a circular table in the garden before the house, Father Czar at their head, round the familiar Samowars, while the crowd look on, and see how the Empress makes and pours out tea. If the pressure of the curious is too great or annoying, at the least sign from the all-potent Father Czar, the whole flood retreats. Sometimes Nicholas rises, and talks with one of the most insignificant in the crowd, or Alexandra invites some one to draw near the tea-table. Thus the greatest simplicity succeeds the utmost magnificence; yesterday the Empress of all the Russias was admired, but to-day the family of the Czar is honoured, the wife, the mother, in their quiet domestic life. The illuminations of the garden surpass those of St. Peter's dome in Rome and the mosques of Constantinople during the time of Beiram, but neither fireworks nor illuminations ever

leave any lasting impression. Those who on the second evening are near the family group have more to say on that subject than about the grandeur of the gardens; the sweet bright eyes of the children, the dignified gravity of the Czar, on this occasion transformed into pleasing courtesy, the grace and elegance of the Empress, and her kindness, are never forgotten by the spectator.

Even after this fête, Peterhof through the whole month affords a curious spectacle, owing to the cadet camp that arrives at the same time as the Court, and continues pitched there for four more weeks. The Emperor's time and strength are also claimed by a second camp—that of the Guards; the latter encampment is about ten versts from Peterhof, at Krasnoe-Selò, and has been frequently alluded to in these pages. The Empress occupies this time of excitement by reading, correspondence, and many favourite pursuits, denied to her too often by circumstances, and in fine weather she is constantly in the open air. The Court seldom remains later than the middle of August in this enchanting spot. From that date the nights suddenly become dark and cold; the troops by instalments march back to the capital, and when the Court departs, the water-works and fountains cease playing, Peterhof becomes silent as death, and the Court returns to quiet Zarskoe-Selò. At all events the brief summer has been thoroughly enjoyed. Autumn in itself demands retired domestic life, for in that latitude it brings only mournful feelings. With the exception of the imperial orangeries, nowhere are the trees decorated

with fruit; on the contrary, they are all stripped of their leaves by the middle of September. The little town seems dead in the evening, scantily lighted, and a band plays only in the day-time for an hour, without attracting any one to the gardens, and very soon the stormy weather no longer permits even this recreation. The summer inmates of Zarskoe-Selò have also retreated into the capital, and if State affairs do not compel them to appear at Court, they rarely indeed visit this little provincial town for pleasure at this time of the year. Thus Alexandra could enjoy quiet evenings in small circles, which not only quickly banished all the melancholy of the season, but collected together the whole family, even to the youngest child. The Empress on those evenings introduced *petits jeux*, in which both old and young gladly take part, reviving in the heart and spirit the innocent mirth we so imperceptibly lose in the graver course of life. The sons and daughters often acted *tableaux vivans*, while their father and mother and some ladies and gentlemen of the Court formed the spectators; another time they played at forfeits and charadès in various forms; or else grave or amusing readings occupied the evening, and also singing and pianoforte-playing, as the whole family had a taste for music, and several in fact showed a certain degree of talent in that art. Thus the youthful Olga, when scarcely fourteen years of age, took part in the trios of Hummel and Beethoven; the two elder sisters played symphonies arranged as pianoforte duets; and the youngest, Alexandra, was also endowed with a voice of rare beauty. The Emperor liked to sing sacred

melodies with his children; he playfully appointed his youngest daughter chief Court-singer, and desired the Minister Wolkonsky to prepare her proper uniform for that office.

The year 1830, of which we are speaking, conferred on the Court, and the northern capital, an incomparable artistic enjoyment — the presence of the world-renowned Henrietta Sontag. Her appearance in Petersburg was also her farewell for a number of years to the world of art, where, indeed, till within a few years, she shone with glorious and memorable lustre. Paganini, the second brilliant star of that epoch, disdained to come to the Neva from the dread of catching cold, yet the enchanting Sontag arrived, devoid of all such alarms, towards the end of August, in Petersburg, attracting people from the most distant provinces to the capital. Petersburg at that time possessed indeed an Italian opera, but only second-rate, and the first appearance of Sontag was well calculated to convince the public how inferior this company was to that of Paris. The town could only admire her talents as a concert singer; whereas the Court wished to see her on the stage, as Rosina in the "Barber of Seville," and as Desdemona in "Othello." A theatre was therefore rapidly erected in the palace of Zarskoe-Selò, the best talents of the Italian troop were put into requisition, and the above-mentioned operas were performed. The reception the fair songstress met with, both from the Court and the city, excited in her the wish to make a more permanent stay in Russia, which was afterwards accomplished, though only for a few

years. Mme. Sontag made a deeper impression on the Empress than by the mere charm of artistic talent, inspiring her with the most kindly interest; she received the great singer as a lady of her society and her Court, in a similar spirit to that of Peter and Catherine, who not only conferred an honourable position in their own circle on persons of high birth, but also of genius. The Empress invited her to her soirées, where this enchanting artist developed her whole heart, and her profound German feelings, awakening the closest sympathy in Alexandra. The talent of this highly endowed lady was enhanced by her feminine virtues; such a rare combination investing her with inestimable value. With the return of Henrietta Sontag to Germany closed also for the Petersburg Court the year 1830, so rich in brilliant fêtes and enjoyments. In the month of November the Imperial family repaired to the capital as usual, perhaps not wholly devoid of a presentiment of some troubled years awaiting them.

CHAPTER II.

NATIONAL ENTERPRISE.

THE tidings of the July revolution in France did not permit the society of Petersburg to continue in the same cheerful mood that prevailed during the July festivities. The Emperor saw in it the same elements aroused, that four years previously had obstructed his way to the throne. People involuntarily recurred to the greatness of soul manifested by Nicholas towards the rebels on the 14th December, comparing his conduct with the infatuated blindness of Charles the Tenth, who, though remote from the dangers of war, by the advice of his minister was staking the throne of the Bourbons on a rubber of whist, and with difficulty saving his own person, which he looked on as so dear to the majority of the French nation. His minister, Polignac, in his eleventh year, swore hatred to revolutionists before a crucifix, but both were deficient in the spirit and courage of the common French soldiery. The July Revolution showed the intelligent public of Petersburg the true greatness of Nicholas, as they had seen him on December 14th; but although the conspiracy of 1825 no longer left any visible traces, still this triumph of the French Revolution found a

secret response in many classes in Russia, as the Poles likewise excited some apprehensions. It was said in the capital that immediately on the arrival of this intelligence, the Emperor had summoned the heir-apparent to his presence, and related the facts himself, adding the warning, that no monarch has a right to set at defiance the laws of the land. The news of the insurrection of the Poles in Warsaw, and the peril of the Grand Duke Constantine, made a strong impression both on the city and the Court. At first it was treated as a mystery, and only whispered in intimate circles, but in the course of a few days it became a public spectre, terrifying by its presence many families, and scaring away for this winter all social amusements. Many ladies and gentlemen, both of the society and the Court, originally sprang from the Polish nation; such as Lubomirsky, Potocki, Branicki, Tschetwertinsky, etc., and were thus in a very critical position. Scarcely had the Guards returned home from the Turkish war, when they were again called on to engage in a conflict within the boundaries of the Empire. The Emperor gave notice of this new campaign to his assembled Generals in the public square, and in presence of the Guards, when all the tried veterans of the Turkish war pressed near their Czar, kissing his hands, and swearing to die for him. How many families in Petersburg were mourning for fathers or sons who had gone with the army! But all departed, not only courageously, but indignant at the reckless ingratitude of the Poles, in endeavouring to deprive the Emperor of the throne, and the hope was loudly expressed in

the capital that this insurrection would be shortly quelled. But decisive tidings of victory were long vainly expected, and the winter passed in uneasiness and mourning, to which was soon added a still greater dread. Asiatic cholera seemed to be making its way direct to Petersburg; many families therefore quitted the capital at the end of April, and went to the country, and others, by sea, to Germany and France; for in Moscow, in spite of all precautionary measures, the malady had broken out and made great ravages, giving rise to the dread of scenes such as that city had witnessed during the days of the plague in 1771. For, like the Athenians during the plague in the time of the Doric war, the inhabitants of the Moscow of that day thronged into the churches, expecting succour from their saints, and especially from the Virgin of Iberia, a sacred picture at the door of the Kremlin. The people collected there in vast crowds, and thus spread the malady. Ambrosius, the Archbishop of Moscow, fell a victim to the fanatical mob, and Catherine the Second at that dreadful period despatched Count Gregor Orlof to prevent, by wise regulations, the dissemination of the pestilence. He succeeded in checking the malady, and Catherine did homage to his courage by the erection of a triumphal marble arch in Zarskoe-Selò as a tribute to her favourite.

Nicholas conveyed his family to retired Zarskoe-Selò (the Empress was again shortly to be confined), drew a cordon round the place, and himself went to Moscow, to bring consolation by his presence and regulations in the hospitals to the unhappy sufferers. It was

a noble trait in Nicholas to expose himself to a danger usually shunned by all. Thus on his arrival in Moscow, the Metropolitan addressed him in these words, "The Czars usually come to this town from Petersburg to enjoy happy fêtes with their people, but you come in the time of need, to bring us succour; may a blessing attend you for this!" While Catherine erected a monument to Orlof for his journey to plague-stricken Moscow, this act of the Emperor's has scarcely been noticed. He introduced more order, as he did wherever he appeared; but the pestilence, in spite of every effort, carried off one-third of the population. Meanwhile, the Empress remained in an anguish of anxiety with her children in Zarskoe-Selò, eagerly expecting the return of her husband. Petersburg was spared till the middle of June; a singularly bright sky and unusual heat seemed likely entirely to avert the arrival of this dreaded guest and its devastations; nevertheless all sanitary measures were already carried out, but a gloom brooded over the town, which at this season of the year displays little of its usual street gaieties. Those who are not constrained to remain in the city by their offices have long quitted it, and many men of business spend their afternoons in the islands, or outside the city. The traffic in the principal streets is not less, but no splendid equipages with four horses and liveried servants are to be seen. In June especially, Petersburg seems quite a commercial town; a number of merchantmen enliven the Neva, and sail backwards and forwards to the custom-house; in the streets, hundreds of freighted waggons are daily to be seen succeeding

each other in long straight processions, often entirely obstructing all traffic; the fashionable world, absent in the country, is replaced by strangers of all nations, and in fact the streets are as crowded as in winter. Although the cholera had been talked about for the last half year, no anxiety had hitherto seized the working and lower orders. At the very time when the higher classes emigrated to the country, workmen, plasterers, waggoners, coachmen, and sailors, were to be seen carelessly loitering about the streets, singing, or sleeping on their sheepskins spread on the street, eating black bread and onions, and drinking quass, little knowing that their usual mode of living was the infallible means of insuring the presence of that destroying angel—cholera. When the manifold rumours at last reached the populace, they pictured to themselves the cholera as a spectral female fury, who stalked along through towns and villages, terrifying every one, startling horses, and strangling men in their sleep; but of a devastating malady they had no conception whatever. Some attacks of illness occurred, which proved, however, the first symptoms of the dreadful malady; but the physicians were wise enough to give them another name. Just as in Athens, the plague first broke out in the Piræus, so here the cholera first appeared in Cronstadt; this was, however, scarcely attended to.

At length it was but too certain that cholera was in the town, and the populace were seized with a great panic of fear, especially as, in the first days of its outbreak, it snatched away, in many houses, in the course of one day, a fourth part of the inmates. Just

at the same time arrived the most unfavourable rumours about the war in Poland, and the common people could only account for all these sudden and mysterious deaths by poisoning on the part of the enemy. Ignorance and wickedness often go hand in hand, and thus the prejudices of the lower orders against the Poles were made use of to incite them to the most detestable deeds. Among the physicians were several with Polish names, and it was not difficult to persuade the credulous people that these had been sent as poisoners by the Poles. The more deadly grew the disease, the more settled was the belief in Polish poisonings, and of course most prevalent in those parts of the town where the greater number of victims fell a prey to the malady. In the eastern quarter of the city, which lies rather higher than the western, at the mouth of the Neva, debouching into the Gulf of Finland, the sickness was milder, and also in the streets occupied by the higher classes of society, but most deadly among servants and the peasantry, as their mode of living was no protection; the disease raged worst of all in the great Garten Strasse and the Hay Market. There the lowest class of people are crowded together at every hour of the day in little booths; a blind man could scent out the public there; the Hay Market offers a still more repulsive spectacle,—the country people collected there, rendering it a matter of difficulty for a respectable man to go near it at any hour of the day. In that quarter especially the populace were firmly persuaded that their food and drink were poisoned by the Poles, so the infatuated people resolved to revenge themselves on the

doctors. They rushed, therefore, into a house in the Hay Market, where a doctor lived whose name was not a Russian one, seized the unhappy man and flung him from a window on the third storey into the street; they also plundered his house, and set about despatching all those who were said to be Poles. The police tried to interfere, but lost courage, were useless, and had only the selfish good sense, when the attack began on the public square, to apprise the Emperor of the tumult, who was at that moment entering the city. This brave man and father of his people drove instantly to the spot, where he alone could bring succour. He appeared in an open calèche, accompanied by his physician, in the midst of the band of murderers; his wrathful look, his thundering voice, made a very different impression from that of the timid police, and in an instant transformed those furious wild beasts into humble and obedient serfs. "Down on your knees and pray to God for pardon!" cried he, on which all knelt down, and tremblingly listened to his words. Probably very few in this multitude had ever seen the Emperor near, as this quarter is so distant from the more civilized parts; but his figure was that of a ruler, his glance that of a commander, who imposes submission at first sight. He sent the criminals into the nearest church, there to implore the forgiveness of God for the blood they had shed. The silent crowd began to sneak away, and soon the square was deserted; the report of the Emperor's presence flew through the city, inspiring as much terror in the minds of the turbulent as the cholera itself. His presence worked as many miracles as in Moscow; not only

was security restored to the streets, but order introduced into the already infested hospitals. The Czar did not venture to inform his delicate wife of what he had gone through in the city; she only saw it mentioned a few days later in a newspaper. The tender consideration of Nicholas, in similar cases, to spare her painful impressions or bad news, seemed a sacred duty, and she was to him an object of the most devoted reverence.

After this scene the town bore indeed a sad aspect: the public disappeared, and also the working classes, fiacre-drivers, public criers, petty hawkers; the long streets seemed dead. The bureaus of the authorities, of schools, and public institutions were closed, and all traffic stopped; only a few solitary individuals at most, coming in from the country from time to time, were to be seen crawling timidly through the streets. At this distressing period, in addition to the unfavourable intelligence from Poland, news arrived of the death of the Grand Duke Constantine, and shortly after, of that of General Diebitsch; about the same time as the gradual disappearance of the cholera, on the 27th July (August 8, N.S.) Alexandra gave birth to her third son, Nicholas. The delicate health of the Empress was severely tried, as the unhappy state of things in Poland could not be concealed from her, and still less could they prevent her hearing of the death of her brother-in-law Constantine.

Nature has seldom produced in two brothers such striking contrasts as in Alexander and Constantine Pawlowitsch, and yet both were born of the same mother, and educated together. While Alexander, by

his amiability and enlightenment, seemed made to delight and to conquer the world, Constantine's rugged and uncontrolled nature was only prone to demolish what the other constructed. They appeared to have sprung from some far distant century and country: Alexander in advance of his time and his kingdom; Constantine centuries in arrear in the culture of the present day. And yet this Grand Duke, notwithstanding all the reproaches justly heaped on him, was not devoid of kindly feeling, nor of nobility of disposition; his courage bordered on foolhardiness, his generosity on unbounded extravagance, his love for Alexander, and his brothers and sisters, on idolatry. By his renunciation of the throne in favour of his younger brother, and by his magnanimous persistence in his promise, he has won for himself a great and noble monument, in a land that in earlier years was rent asunder by civil wars; to his elder and his younger brothers, Alexander and Nicholas, he became only the first of their subjects,—strict and severe, even to a painful degree, in performing the duties he had undertaken. He was beloved by the soldiery, feared by the officers, and by another portion of the public hated and shunned, especially by ladies.

And yet it was a lady—Princess Lowicz—who exercised the greatest influence over this arrogant character, curbing the wild outbursts of his passion, before whose loving glances all the harshness of his demeanour softened, for whose sake he probably renounced the throne, and who conferred on him that domestic happiness, which his brother Alexander sought in vain.

The influence of this lady controlled, softened, and humanized his nature. After her husband's death she came to Zarskoe-Selò, where she died a few months later.

In addition to the universal depression produced this year by war, cholera, and insurrections, a fresh source of dissatisfaction took possession of society and the Court. The laurels won by General Diebitsch in Turkey, in spite of considerable silent envy, obtained a certain public recognition; but his disasters in Poland caused universal discontent, not only with regard to the unhappy Commander-in-Chief himself, but also as to the number of German generals in this war, and this feeling extended to all the Germans in Russia. The ancient jealousy between the two nationalities was violently revived, and found vent in expressions of open hatred of the Germans by the Russians. All the names of those commanders of the different *corps d'armées* who acquired lustre in the Polish campaign were German, such as Pahlen, Toll, Rosen, Geismar, Sacken, Rüdiger, Kreuz; whereas the names of the old Russian Princes seemed to have utterly vanished in Nicholas's reign, or reduced to subordinate positions. A calm examination into the course of events proves that less blame attached to the hero of the Balkan as the author of these disasters, than to a succession of mischances, and probably secret enemies working against him. This blind hatred, when once awakened, caused it to be quite forgotten that the army set out intoxicated with victory; that in this state of arrogant excitement, they thought Poland overthrown, even before they entered the

country; so much so, that many officers declared they would not write to their relations and friends till they arrived in Paris. Depression closely follows presumption. How great the hatred was of a powerful Court party against this unfortunate foreigner, we can gather from an incident that occurred twenty years after his death. One of his most deadly foes was dining with the Imperial Court-chamberlain, when he was observed not to drink his glass of champagne; when asked the reason, he answered, with a bitter smile, "I only drink champagne once a year,—on the anniversary of Field-Marshal Diebitsch's death." This hatred, once awakened, was carefully cherished, and brought to the Emperor's ears, but without any result, as at that time he had not yet declared his subsequent theory,—"one language, one church, and one law." But even later, the feelings of the Sovereign were always superior to petty considerations and party spirit; in all he only saw his subjects, and rewarded them according to their merits, without inquiring as to their origin or confession of faith. It cannot, however, be denied that after Diebitsch's death, when succeeded by Paskewitsch, the national hatred was more decidedly manifested, and what is called the old Russian party seemed triumphantly to take root at Court. The public forgot what good service Prussia, under the Empress's influence with her father, had performed in the war; they did not remember that German doctors, during the campaign, shielded and saved whole regiments from the cholera.

At Court, indeed, everything remained the same as before; there the predilection of Nicholas for German

officials and German physicians could neither be denied nor prevented. What turn events might have taken at that time, but for the universally beloved Alexandra, we leave to the penetration of the reader. Had the detestation of the lower classes towards foreign physicians, and their suspicions as to poison, been allowed to spread, the scenes in the Hay Market might have recurred in various parts of the town; but all other quarters remained quiet, and the populace showed entire confidence in the German doctors. The Empress considered this the most unhappy year of her life, but she endured it with her wonted fortitude; the rage of party never attacked her, although in the course of the summer it penetrated even into her own schools. Many families in the capital had to deplore the loss of relations, and, in spite of the pacification of Poland, the ensuing winter was passed in universal depression and sorrow. The cholera caused the same devastation in Berlin, and scenes occurred as terrible as those in the Hay Market, thus Alexandra was in a state of perpetual anxiety and excitement.

A plan was at that time gradually matured to call forth, by means of better education, national knowledge and national enlightenment. Whether this idea first emanated from the Emperor alone, or was suggested by others, cannot be positively decided. The July Revolution was, at any rate, the first exciting cause of hatred towards foreigners. The Government, only five years before, with difficulty rescued the State from a widely spread conspiracy, and now it was to be feared that French ideas of a similar kind were about to strike

fresh roots in Russian soil, by the numbers of French tutors in aristocratic mansions. Nicholas, besides, remarked with displeasure that many of the young men who came on Sundays to the heir-apparent had much the air of native Frenchmen, treating their mother-tongue with infinite contempt in his presence, and seeming scarcely to know sufficient Russian for the purposes of conversation; in fact, there were several who could not even speak it at all. The just wrath that he loudly expressed on this point had one good result, that of all aristocratic families henceforth attaching more value to learning thoroughly their mother tongue. Nicholas's design was thus completely fulfilled, namely, that all who wished to enter the service of the State should be complete masters of the language of their own country. In Petersburg were to be found distinguished professors of all Oriental and Western tongues, but teachers of Russian were wanting, and an intelligent man declared to the Emperor that it was easier to find a good teacher of Chinese than of Russian, the best being exclusively of German extraction.

But a thorough knowledge of Russian, and introducing it into society, by no means produced national enlightenment, a work that in all countries and periods has cost centuries of efforts and perseverance. In many frivolous heads, however, especially in the capital, the opinion was obstinately maintained, that by studying the mother tongue, especially by scientific lectures, in Russian, at schools and universities, the work of national education and culture would be accomplished. So abso-

lute a form of government as that of Russia has ever been could scarcely develop a free national spirit and promote self-dependent cultivation, and yet quite as little wholly suppress its existing peculiarities. Up to the time of Romanow the Russian people were educated solely by their Church, which stamped on them an impress deviating widely from that of all other European nations; although, since Peter the Great, many of the ancient usages had been swept away, still these were replaced by European forms, though only in the capital. But at all times the progress made by other nations in scientific and national development remained unknown to the Russians. We allude to the progress made by means of the ancient classics. For the last three centuries, Italians, Frenchmen, Germans, and Britons, have appropriated the collected stores of ancient lore by the study of both the classical tongues, examining into the departments of science, and extending it, exercising their skill in every phase of art, reaping many laurels, like the Greeks and Romans, in eloquence and poetry, establishing a number of new discoveries, and thus gradually succeeded in acquiring an independent national literature, and attaining a degree of national enlightenment peculiar to themselves. But even at the time when the ancients were surpassed in most arts, and in all sciences, by later races, still classical lore formed the basis of education in the four great nations. In Russia, or rather in Petersburg, many were to be found familiar with Virgil and Horace, but only through French and German translations; and though they thus acquired a species of dilettante knowledge of antiquity,

not a single classic work of the Greeks or Romans had been carefully studied, critically examined, and explained by a Russian, or adapted to the use of the young in schools, although, according to the precedent of German gymnasiums, Roman prose-writers and poets were specially studied.

In the course of the next few years about twenty foreign places of education were closed in Petersburg alone, and the pupils sent to Russian Crown institutions. All scientific pursuits were here taught in Russian, and foreign languages, though still retained, were but little regarded. It was found possible to procure the most indispensable staff of teachers for the capital, but for the enormous extent of the interior of the country the resources of the two capitals were wholly inadequate, especially as a Russian seldom adopts the profession of teaching. A particular establishment was therefore founded in Petersburg, in which Russian gymnasium teachers alone were to receive instruction, for the interior of the country, and yet the Director himself was a German, Counsellor Middendorf, and several other professors were obliged to be procured from foreign countries. We do not venture to pronounce whether the results of these well-intended efforts of the Government were successful, but we cannot conceal the fact that the institution was abolished at the end of fifteen years. Of much greater importance to the whole State was the foundation of a school of Law, by Prince Peter of Oldenburg, the Emperor's nephew. He was a son of the Grand Duchess Katharina, later Queen of Würtemberg, and had been

educated abroad, but with the view of entering the service of Russia. The Russian language was therefore as familiar to him as German; his former education was, however, thoroughly German, and was thus founded on classical studies; being a prince, and so nearly related to the Imperial family, he was compelled to choose the military profession, or at least to wear a military uniform, without which, in Russia, no prince of the blood could for one moment appear; but the Prince's disposition was not warlike, and he was desirous of seeking an efficient sphere in a peaceful field. His German relatives and teachers had not neglected to develop and to maintain in him independent views and noble thoughts, because, being a nephew of the Emperor, he could venture to express more liberal opinions than the highest authorities. The Prince's disposition was modest and rather shy, full of goodness and benevolence, but being then a novice, not so efficient as his talents entitled him to be when in contact with the despotic character of the Emperor. After observing the country minutely for some years he proposed to Nicholas to establish a school of Law, as on every side he found the administration of justice shamefully neglected. It was neither the laws nor judicial proceedings that were to be changed or improved by this measure, but those in authority who administered them, as they were not only devoid of any erudite knowledge of law, but still more deficient in that purity and incorruptibility of character without which justice can never prevail. After great ill-will and opposition, the Institute was at last established, and is still flourishing at the end of

five-and-twenty years. The chief lawyers have been educated in this institution when boys, and at all events have grown to manhood in a purer atmosphere, and besides, are themselves sprung from the most irreproachable families. A vast amount of officials have been educated for the Government in this way, and are distinguished from the rest by their moral conduct. The chief pursuit of this noble prince since that period has been universal education; various other schools were given into his charge, the female ones, without exception, and in these, by his careful superintendence of music and singing, he awakened a refined taste, and in boys' schools he succeeded in the furtherance of classical studies. Although the prince, as a nephew of Nicholas and a member of the reigning family, subsequently enjoyed the title of "Imperial Highness," still his life was more that of a private individual, especially after his marriage with a Princess of Nassau, who, for the sake of love, exchanged the beautiful Rhine for the cold Neva. This Prince of Oldenburg and his family lived in a palace of his own, the interior of which was handsomely arranged, and contained within its walls one of the happiest families we have ever known. The Princess, though well calculated by her intellect, disposition, and high culture, to play the brilliant part of a great lady, preferred devoting all her time to the education of her children, rarely seeking the world, and enjoying life exclusively at home, with her family and her friends. Here the father and mother and children dined at one table, with the aides-de-camp, tutors, and governesses, and a few invited guests, occupying

the evenings chiefly with music, the one favourite amusement of the Prince. He often invited his law-students to his domestic circle, inspiring them with his taste for art and family affection, as one of the most precious legacies for their subsequent career. By the founding of this Law school, by his paternal anxiety for the culture of upright officials, the Prince has gained a memorable monument, and proved one of the greatest benefactors of his country. The Court, however, was quite unaffected by these national impulses and movements, and many branches of State administration and organization remained, as before, in the hands of Germans; even the German commanders of corps were not so easily replaced by Russians, as Diebitsch had been by Paskewitsch. The organs of Russian diplomacy in Europe belonged to the most dissimilar nations, and the Russians were represented only in individual cases. At the head of Foreign affairs stood Count Nesselrode, whom we have already alluded to as one of the props of Nicholas's reign. A German name, so ancient, in such a high position, and of such wide-spreading influence, excited perpetual malevolence and suspicion in the natives of the kingdom and the national party, therefore the value of this minister as a statesman has never been sufficiently acknowledged. Had he been without any special talents, or much diversity of information, profound knowledge of European cabinets, and above all, devoid of the refined tact skilfully to oppose the iron will of the Czar, to yield to him at the proper moment, in order to accomplish his object on some other occasion the more

successfully, this minister, as a German, never could have succeeded in acquiring the title and rank of a Chancellor. He can be compared neither with Talleyrand nor Metternich; he was more true to his views and principles than the former, but his efficiency was more limited in Russia than that of the latter in Austria; with the affairs of the interior of Russia he never intermeddled; to him his high position was a conciliatory vocation, and peaceful mediation, and during his stay in office nothing ever occurred derogatory to the dignity of the Emperor and the kingdom. He was a man of sound understanding, and of calm deliberation, who carried out his plans surely and steadily. With all his German solidity he was devoid of punctilious pedantry, and with all his true modesty he had the moral courage to defend his views against many enemies; he knew how to select the right man for his work, and also the fitting time and place. The national movement did not alter his views, and more than ever, since his day, do we find Russian diplomacy in the hands of Germans.

In London, Prince Lieven and his intellectual wife (so skilled in politics), were of German origin; next to them, the Polish Count Matusiewitsch was probably the most esteemed among the Russian diplomatists of that day. He was a proof of the varied information classical studies bestow on a man, while the ease with which he put down his thoughts on paper in different languages, the perseverance and solidity of his labours, combined with great natural talents, fully proved the rare value of this young nobleman. He had been educated in Paris, and from his youth upwards as

familiar with ancient as with modern tongues,—as well versed in Horace and Tacitus as in Shakespeare and Schiller. To hear him, in serious moments, discussing history and philosophy, it seemed as if these two branches of knowledge had been the main study of his life. If, on the other hand, he was out with the hounds in England, or interested in a race, he seemed to forget all other occupations in order to spend his life in the English style. Too severe a strain both on mind and body caused his death in his fortieth year. Like all Russian diplomatists, Matusiewitsch was seldom in Petersburg; the interests of the interior of the country were disregarded by all; indeed, several of these never saw Russia under the rule of Nicholas, while others could not speak a word of Russian, so any attempt at conversation by their countrymen would have perplexed them exceedingly. The Duc de Richelieu, at the royal table in Paris, often conversed with his neighbour in Russian, in order that Pozzo di Borgo, the Russian ambassador, might not understand him. The Emperor, nevertheless, knew how to appreciate the rare merits of such men, and did not consider that any profound knowledge of the Russian literature of that period would have added much to their influence. Since the time of Catherine, European States and their relations had assumed so strange an aspect to a Russian eye that both European enlightenment and great experience were requisite to comprehend them, and to disentangle the threads that connected the Russian Court with those of Europe, and to sustain amicable relations with them. For Paris and the restored Bourbons, a happier choice

could scarely have been made than that of Count Pozzo di Borgo—a Corsican by birth, an advocate by profession, and, from the commencement of the Revolution in France, a deputy from his fatherland in the National Assembly. His political views veered round with the various phases of that great State revolution, his hatred to Buonaparte alone remained the same in all his subsequent posts, and indeed bore somewhat the character of a Corsican *vendetta.*

From the year 1798 he had been successively in the Austrian, English, and Russian service, where Buonaparte was hated, persecuted, and made war against; after Waterloo, Pozzo di Borgo could with truth say,—"Though I was not so fortunate as alone to cause his downfall, I have at least thrown the last shovelful of earth on his grave." He was not so consummate a master of the French language in conversation as in writing. Without a fatherland, without a family, without any private interests, this man recalls the Legates of the middle ages, who, however, were the purest and most efficient tools in the hands of the Pope. He considered the European State system not as an organization, but as a machine, that must be made subservient to the purposes of rulers. The State was to him only a piece of dead greatness, and, had such been really the fact, Pozzo di Borgo would have formed the most correct estimation of its powers, and been its surest guide. He was the most finished specimen of a vassal in the hands of a despotic master. Russian ministers and ambassadors are provided with munificent sums, in order everywhere properly to sustain the dignity of their

country, and the house of this diplomatist in Paris was of the most brilliant discription; Russian hospitality towards friends and foes, diplomatists and laymen, was here exercised in the most lavish manner. This enabled him thoroughly to study the whole society, and to win the confidence of many who usually avoid diplomatic houses. The despatches of the Count are masterpieces in form and substance, in profound insight, in perfect circumspection, in brevity, and clearness of description; many of these are now known to the public from the "Portofoglio." We are struck with the means selected by a clear-sighted Government, and cannot refuse our high approbation.

In addition to the two we have named (a Pole and a Corsican), was a third, of equal importance—General Peter von Suchtelen, a Dutchman, the diplomatic organ of Russia at the Swedish Court. Pozzo di Borgo was a stately person, whose appearance was imposing wherever he went; whereas Suchtelen was little, thin, and insignificant, indeed somewhat bent, as if from sheer politeness. Faithful to the traditions of Catherine's day, the little man never showed himself in the streets of Stockholm but in a carriage drawn by six horses, and gained the good opinion of the public by his kindly greetings. Many Russian diplomatists observe the custom of driving with four horses, even in the most petty capitals, where the native minister goes about chiefly on foot. Suchtelen had been educated in Holland at a time when classical antiquity was looked on as the *Evangelium* of all enlightenment. Although intended for the military profession, he remained faithful for life to his humanistic

tendencies, and expended large sums on collections of every kind, particularly on a library, which eventually contributed great treasures to the Imperial one in Petersburg. His house was, for Swedes, a museum of pictures, sketches, engravings, and coins; and his fine park always open to the public. His presence tempted the Swedes almost to forget what they had lost through Russia. In his house appeared the Royal family, the whole of the diplomatic corps, the elegant Stockholm world, native artists, and literary men, and the few strangers whose destiny brought them into these distant northern latitudes.

The Russian ambassador in Berlin, Herr von Ribeaupierre, though born in Russia, was French by descent and in character; one of the most refined and agreeable men in a *salon*, and endowed with the French gift of conversation to an extent seldom to be met with in this century, even in Paris itself. He had been a page at the Court of Catherine, and a friend of Nesselrode's from his sixteenth year. Constantinople had been the chief scene of his diplomatic career, after extorting the treaty of Akjerman. His influence in Berlin was not so universal as that of Suchtelen in Stockholm, but much greater with the fair sex, over whom Ribeaupierre's manner exercised vast sway. Recalled to Petersburg, he lived at Court as a Chamberlain, the only one of the diplomatic class who did so, and was always welcome to the Emperor and Empress, by his talent for social conversation; he was seldom absent from the soirées of the latter, and his presence, if not always amusing, was at least never wearying.

Baron Nicolay, in Copenhagen, must also be included in this succession of diplomatists with foreign names. His post was certainly not so difficult as those we have already discussed. He was the son of the well-known writer of fables, Nicolay, who, even when secretary to the Empéror Paul, did not abandon his Muse. Also Herr von Oubril in Spain, Baron Maltitz in Holland, Count Stackelberg in Naples, Baron Krüdener, etc., etc. In fact, only one old Russian name is to be found among the diplomatists of that day, Herr von Tatistchef, in Vienna, who was, however, replaced by Count Medem. Count Nesselrode has been reproached with having bestowed all these important posts on foreigners, but this is unjust. Most of these names appear in Alexander's time, and more recent ones could as little have been appointed on his own responsibility as without Nicholas's approval. Alexander's personality and sympathy exercised the greatest influence on the course of Russian politics, and likewise on diplomacy. Nicholas had no occasion to change either the state of matters or the appointed organs; in fact, he might well regard this portion of his government as the best inheritance bequeathed to him by his brother. Foreign countries had cause to envy the Russian system of government, and also to admire and dread it, for it had the power of selecting out of all nations the best talents, and placing each in his right position. The great success of Russian diplomacy at the Peace of Adrianople, and the treaty of Hunkiar-Skelessi, fully substantiates this, when compared with other States, limited in the choice of their diplomatists to a particular

class of society. Enlightened, right-thinking Russians, who had impartially examined the inner springs of State life, were in the habit of declaring that the greatness of the country consisted in every void being at once filled up, and the best man found for the post. Such men felt neither envy nor jealousy of foreigners, but rejoiced, with a certain degree of pride, that talent should find ample recognition in Russia. Count Alexei, afterwards Prince Orlof, was often employed by the Emperor in difficult diplomatic missions, although neither his own sphere of work nor natural vocation ought to have numbered him among this class, for he was more a man of the sword than the pen, with which all those we have previously named so highly distinguished themselves. True to the spirit of his family, his nature was enterprising, and rapid in carrying out his plans. On December 14th, he appeared first with his regiment in the Isaac Platz to defend Nicholas, and during the whole of that sovereign's reign he continued his most chivalrous friend, with almost the same enthusiasm for his person that Ali felt for that of the Prophet. He appeared in Adrianople, Berlin, Vienna, Hunkiar-Skelessi, and at last in Paris, as an embodiment of the Emperor's final and immoveable will. His deportment was remarkable for its military bearing, his countenance kindly, but dignified, more smiling than grave; his manners those of a man of high degree, rather imperious on the whole, the type of Slavonic-Russian nature, chiefly resembling Prince Menschikoff, without, however, his sarcastic malice, but also without the profound knowledge and diversity of the Minister of

Marine. He was the faithful companion of Nicholas in his journeys, on whose shoulder the weary Autocrat often rested his head in the carriage, and he had sufficient tact to charm away his master's ill-humour by some playful remark, and considerate enough never to offend the most insignificant person, or even to overlook them.

Orlof is the first of those politicians who acquired importance under and through Nicholas, and especially adorned his reign. Until his appointment as Director of the Third Division of the Imperial Court of Chancery, we find him only employed in special and extraordinary missions, living in a small unpretentious house in the town, without the pomp and splendour to which his great wealth entitled him. While his own interest did not extend beyond the ambition of his present service, he caused his only son to be educated with extraordinary care, and in another spirit. It was the life-long mission of this young man's mother, *née* Sherebzof, to make her son's views assume another direction than the limited national one, so constantly pursued at that time. He was gifted with a brilliant capacity, to which he united steady industry. He passed the days and nights that other young Russians devote to pleasure, in studies of every kind; and, when afterwards his father became Director of the Secret Police, he was the most enlightened and liberal, the most scientific and well-informed young man in the metropolis.

Russia's power, and the estimation in which she was held in Europe, visibly increased, and the national character was consequently elevated. The Russian national

costume for ladies became the fashion at the same period as the Russian language and literature, painting and music. National efforts shortly assumed a bolder character; when Brülow's celebrated picture, "The Last Days of Pompeii," after having travelled through all Europe, at length reached Petersburg, Russian pens and voices proclaimed him the first painter in the world. The genius of this artist, developed under an Italian sky, went to wreck and ruin on the banks of the Neva; but many Russians even thought his works crude and unfinished. This national impetus, so suddenly awakened, was specially fostered by certain individuals, and of these we must first name Count Uwarof, who succeeded Prince Lieven at the head of the administration of popular enlightenment with as important a result as Paskewitsch when he replaced Diebitsch. Uwarof was a man of dazzling and manifold accomplishments. He spoke and wrote modern languages with the utmost facility. He was in connection with all the scientific notabilities of foreign countries, and, by his erudition and acquirements, seemed peculiarly fitted to guide the national development. Seldom has this important branch of the State been in the hands of so finished a man of the world, and so accomplished a courtier as Uwarof. How far his zeal was genuine and beneficial to the great cause, we do not take it upon ourselves to pronounce, nor even suggest whether it proceeded from the pure impulses of an old Russian heart, or in order to direct the attention of the Court towards the Minister. Although promoted in rank and adorned with orders, and finally made a Count, he never

seems to have attained the full confidence of the Emperor to the same degree as many others; at all events, he was less in the society of the Imperial family than he had hoped. He raised the war-cry of the new faction,—"Autocracy, Orthodoxy, National Spirit," to the level of a principle, nay, a dogma, without hearkening to many another voice that would gladly have seen autocracy backed by the laws, orthodoxy by toleration, and national spirit by cultivation and enlightenment. Many contemporaries of Uwarof endeavoured to set to work in a similar spirit, but being devoid of his tact and knowledge, they did more harm than good to the great cause by their blind zeal. The most prominent of these was Count Dmitri Bludof. Less of a courtier than Uwarof, and far less of a gallant cavalier than that minister, he possessed, however, knowledge equally profound. He first turned the Emperor's attention on him by his Report on the Commission of Inquiry on the conspirators, and thenceforward he was intrusted through life with the most weighty affairs and offices. His character had something honest, modest, and free from all hypocrisy, which gained him the confidence of high and low.

In the midst of this national movement the public voice was impartially silent, but in no degree concealed its recognition of foreign elements as often as the choice lay between the two. Although Russian pens placed Brülow, the portrait-painter, beside, or even above, Raphael, still the great authorities of the realm all aspired to the honour of seeing themselves portrayed by the Berlin painter, Krüger. Highly as some Rus-

sians were commended as portrait-painters, still the Emperor's portrait on horseback was intrusted to the latter, while his old family friend, Sauerweid, remained a Cabinet painter. The Russian merchant in Gostidnodwor boasted of his wares as being German; the old Russian horn-music gradually gave way to foreign orchestras, and a European spirit was specially introduced along with music, although the censorship prohibited entire works of history on account of particular passages, and the secret police exercised the most rigid surveillance over conversation in every society. Altogether, it was proved that the national spirit was quite compatible with foreign enlightenment, the latter, however, having awakened earnest emulation in the nation.

Circumstances caused the years 1830 to 1834 to be less stirring and brilliant both for the Court and the city. War, cholera, and their results, were in themselves a sufficient reason for this, but other causes also contributed towards it. In October 1832 the Empress's fourth and last son was born, and a conflagration that reduced to ashes in this year a certain quarter of the capital, induced the Emperor to apply the large sums intended for the festivities in Peterhof to the benefit of the sufferers by the fire. The Italian opera was closed, and the German theatre, though possessing an admirable company of actors, was seldom visited by the fashionable world. The health of Alexandra, who had presented the kingdom with seven living children, was materially weakened, and required a degree of care that she could not always herself bestow. The Russian Court, more than any other, lives for the kingdom, and

more especially for the capital, and the Empress is the soul of Court life.

A considerable change took place at this time in the education of the heir-apparent: General Mörder had been so alarmed at a fall of his pupil from his horse, that it caused a permanent affection of the heart. He therefore, after a time, left Petersburg, in the hope that his health might be restored in Italy; but he died in the year 1833, in Rome, the first severe loss for the young man. Mörder was replaced by General Kawelin, Director of the Page Corps, a man of eager zeal and upright ideas, and one of the first to show his devotion to the monarch on December 14th, who rewarded his loyalty by the most unlimited confidence.

CHAPTER III.

FAMILY LIFE (1834-1839.)

WITH the year 1834 began for the Imperial family the period that, according to Alexandra's own declaration, was the happiest of her life, but did not last much beyond the year 1839. The Emperor was held in the most incontestable respect as a monarch by all Europe, both by friend and foe, even by the refractory Poles; and, in his own kingdom, from the most insignificant serf up to the highest authorities in the realm, he was an object of almost sacred veneration. Before his accession, the public scarcely knew by sight the haggard, pale Grand Duke Nicholas. His face was without expression, his attitude stiff, his name scarcely ever alluded to between Constantine and Alexander, though his wife was distinguished by her beauty and amiability. Now his name had a place in history, beside the greatest heroes of past ages and the rulers of the present day, as one of the most energetic and powerful of them all; and he was also acknowledged to be the handsomest man in Europe. His consort was equally majestic in demeanour, though the fascinating expression of her countenance, during the stormy years of her reign, had gradually changed, whereas the Emperor seemed to have become younger and more vigor-

ous. But even in fading health Alexandra shone in the lustre of inimitable grace; and if Nicholas, throughout the kingdom, was considered the man of action and energy, the Empress was thought the impersonation of goodness, amiability, and kindly conciliation. In her seven children she had been almost as richly endowed by Heaven as the wife of Paul, and in her four sons were repeated the names of the four sons of that Emperor. This year was to proclaim the majority of the heir-apparent, now sixteen, and a grand fête was to be given to the family and the country on the occasion. We believe that, among all European States, Russia alone declares the heir-apparent of age at sixteen. This Act was at that period of greater importance, as it protected the kingdom from complications such as we have seen on the death of Alexander. The fête took place on April 17th, the Prince's birth-day. The Council of the Empire and the Holy Synod, the Ministers, the Senate, the Diplomatic Corps, the Court Marshals, the Officers of the Guards, the Admirals and Captains of the Fleet, the Generals and Colonels of the Army, the Directors of Departments, one and all, assembled in the Winter Palace, while art and science, commerce, finance, and industry were represented by deputies. Thus, in the presence of the whole kingdom, the heir to the throne takes the oath of fidelity on the cross and the gospels, surrounded by the highest ecclesiastical powers. When all are assembled in the church, as well as in the interminable corridors and apartments of the Palace, the ceremony begins with high mass when the Imperial family enter the church; the heir-apparent, conducted

by the Emperor, advances to the reading-desk, on which lie the cross and the gospels. The Metropolitan presents the heir to the throne with the formulary of the oath, which he takes in his left hand, and, raising his right, he swears loyally to serve his ruler and father, to maintain all the rights of autocracy, and to defend them with his life and his blood, and to preserve the inviolability of the whole kingdom in every part. He also vows to guard the order of succession, so that he may be able hereafter to give account to Providence, on the day of judgment, of his actions. "Lord God! King of Kings!" he adds, "teach, enlighten, and guide me by Thy wisdom; send down Thy Holy Ghost from heaven above, that I may understand what is pleasing in Thine eyes and right in Thy sight. My heart is in Thine hands. Amen!"

The heir-apparent signs the document, and turns to the Emperor, who embraces him, and to the Empress, whose hand he kisses. Not only the hearts of his family, but those of all present, were visibly touched on hearing this young voice, in deep emotion, pronounce such solemn vows, the full importance of which possibly his youthful mind could scarcely grasp. The State Chancellor, Count Nesselrode, receives the signed document, and places it among the State archives along with other Acts. After a *Te Deum*, the Emperor and Empress and the heir-apparent having received the congratulations of the highest orders of the priesthood, the procession betakes itself to the George Hall, where, on the steps of the throne, the confessor of the Imperial family reads aloud the oath, which the heir-apparent repeats

after him word by word. It refers to the Emperor and the country, and designates the heir-apparent as the future ruler and defender of his Fatherland. Only the great authorities are present during the first vow taken in the church, whereas, in the Hall, the throne is decorated with banners and military weapons, and encompassed with pages, cavaliers, land, marine, and artillery cadets—the future defenders of the kingdom. The procession proceeds hence to the Imperial apartments, where the congratulations of the secular authorities of the highest rank are offered. In addition to this ecclesiastical and military act, the city of Petersburg did honour to the occasion by an illumination, and the nobility by a brilliant ball in the Narischkin House, where the young man made his first appearance in the society of the capital. Colonel Lwoff presented the Russian people with the celebrated national hymn, which, through Benkendorf, was quickly diffused through the city and country on every barrel-organ, and in a short time acquired European fame. Seldom had any Petersburg fête been attended by such cheerfulness as the majority of this heir-apparent, who was now closely seen and observed by many thousands. His charming youthful appearance, his clear eyes, with the gentle expression of his mother, and his chivalrous bearing, proclaimed to his people the benevolence that filled his heart, and which every step of his reign has confirmed. On his countenance was to be read another epoch,—when the father's sternness would be happily replaced by more unrestraint, and thus it has in truth proved. It was the family fête of the nation.

This event did not, however, terminate the education of the heir-apparent, but only for a few days interrupted it; and it was followed by another and a more practical result. Nicholas was well aware of what he had lost by the interruption of his education in 1812, when only sixteen, and sought to supply to his son that in which he was himself deficient. When he quitted the pedantic schoolroom of Gatschina, in the next few years previous to his travels, his whole society consisted entirely of some young officers, and he not only remained ignorant of those branches of knowledge peculiarly incumbent on sovereigns, but also of such as adorn the life of every cultivated man. Now persons of the greatest distinction, both in instruction and social intercourse, were invited to the table and soirées of the heir-apparent. Russian law appoints a curator for the Prince after attaining his majority, whose office is nominally that of House Comptroller and Privy Purse, but the real purpose is to accustom the young man to refined society, and to initiate him into the forms and usages of foreign Courts, even before his travels commence, and for this end a happier choice could scarcely have been made than of Prince Lieven. His mother, the highly esteemed Princess Lieven, had taken charge in the previous century under Catherine the Second, of the Grand Duchesses, Paul's daughters. So the Prince had been acquainted with the Court from his childhood, and likewise for a generation had been Russian Minister in Berlin and in London. By simply relating his own actions during this century, Prince Lieven made his pupil acquainted with the spirit of all

European cabinets, the forms of courts, and the most hidden springs of events. This was a worthy close to his brilliant career, and the happiest application of his manifold experiences. His wife, *née* Benkendorf, was probably of still greater influence, but we intend to dedicate a separate chapter to her hereafter.

The appointment of Prince Lieven to so prominent and influential a position was a proof of the little value attached by the Emperor to the recently awakened national voice. Regarding solely the improvement of his son, he selected Count Speransky, not only that he might keep alive, as much as possible, feelings of justice in the future ruler, but also enlighten him as to the legitimate claims on him in this respect, by the exigencies of the country and the period. Speransky at that date, 1834, was universally honoured; a year previously, in the Council of the Empire, he delivered the new code of laws to the Emperor, when the monarch, in presence of all the members of that aristocratic assemblage, took the star of St. Andrew off his own head to decorate that of this Russian Trebonian. Speransky's humane and liberal views as to a constitution, justice, public education, had been long recognised by all; and in the young heir to the throne, he found a frank spirit, well fitted to profit by his wise teaching. The great reforms with which Alexander the Second commenced his reign were chiefly suggested by Speransky; without taking any share in the spurious national movement, he procured greater advantages for the country than any other patriot, and himself remained its brightest ornament. While Speransky in-

culcated on his pupil the requirements of the present and the future of Russia, a third person showed him the relations in which the country stood towards the rest of Europe since the time of Peter the Great. We allude to Baron Brunnow, at that time the wisest head in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He possessed equally with the others German culture, which he acquired chiefly at the University of Leipzig. He was first remarked by the Russian Government, owing to a little pamphlet, "On the Spirit of German Universities and Secret Associations"—he entered their service, and became an indispensable assistant in the Chancery Office of Count Nesselrode. His exterior was homely, his conversation intellectual, witty, and varied, his knowledge profound, and extending over many phases.

These clever men were invited as often as possible to the table of the Prince, and not less so ministers, adjutant-generals, and those distinguished in art and science, so that by degrees the whole machinery of his father's government was made known to him. A year after his coming of age, the last examination on his studies took place in the presence of his own family, the staff of teachers, and many persons invited by the Emperor; and a year after ensued his journey through Russia and Europe. Nothing was omitted that could form a noble-minded man and an enlightened sovereign. The same fate befel Prince Lieven as that of the heir-apparent's first governor—he died in Rome.

In the year 1834 also began the education of the Emperor's second son, Constantine. Till their seventh year is completed, all the Imperial children remain

under female auspices, generally under the care of elderly English ladies. But when this second son was only five, the Emperor gave him a tutor, as he not only showed great buoyancy of spirit, but a very decided will. Nicholas intended this son to be Grand-Admiral of the Russian Fleet, so the naval profession was to be specially considered in his education. For this purpose also the right man was found in Frederick von Lütke, subsequently an admiral, but at that time the youngest circumnavigator of the globe, who, since Behring, had contributed to the knowledge of various countries. Lütke, when a young officer of twenty, made a voyage round the world, and ten years afterwards a second, as chief of a special enterprise; he also sailed to Nova Zembla, so he was well versed in his profession, and, in short, more at home at sea than on land. His long stay at sea, his almost exclusive pursuit of the exact sciences, had given his character something peremptory and decided; his manner was straightforward, blunt, apparently even harsh; but he was a man of feeling, and indeed, to a certain degree, cheerful and jovial. The Imperial family discovered and valued the varied instruction and character of this man, when, in the year 1832, he escorted the Grand Duchesses by sea to Revel. The tales he told, and his lively conversation, delighted the youthful Constantine, and awoke in him love for a seafaring life, for which his nature did not seem fitted. When the boy was seven years old, he was almost too early developed, by intercourse with Lütke; he showed eager interest in the histories and discoveries of all circumnavigators.

At the commencement of the year 1834, Lütke, and also Joukowsky, communicated to me that I was to be appointed the guide and instructor of young Constantine, Joukowsky's time being so much monopolized by the heir-apparent; I had been long familiar with this idea, first suggested to me by Speransky, and for which purpose he introduced me to Joukowsky. My nomination followed on December 14th, the date of my first entrance into the Imperial family. Till then I had never attended any Court whatsoever, the greater, therefore, was my embarassment on my way to the Winter Palace. But all anxiety as to my first appearance proved wholly unnecessary, as Constantine received me with a degree of cordiality far greater than I had met with in other families. As I had just come from Italy, the hours of my first interview with the animated boy passed as quick as lightning, in tales about Vesuvius, Rome, and sea voyages, and I at once felt that my undertaking was likely to bring forth good fruits. A few days afterwards followed my presentation to the Emperor and the Empress, but my timidity was now considerably diminished. In a hall where all the Imperial children practised gymnastic exercises, the Emperor came in just at the moment when I least expected him. His personal appearance had too an imposing an effect on all strangers for any one to maintain his usual state of self-possession; and yet my excitement was caused not so much by timidity, as by joy at seeing so renowned a man. He was himself well aware of the effect of his glance on many persons, and therefore it seemed rather to be his wish

to awaken confidence and security in me. The tone of his voice had certainly nothing imperious, and soon became even confidential. He mentioned that he had previously remarked me, and wished to know me, as his son Constantine had rendered him desirous to make my acquaintance; he hoped for a good result from so happy a commencement. He then left the room with a courteous bow. Some days afterwards I was commanded to wait on the Empress, and conducted to her by my young pupil himself. The cabinet of the illustrious lady was splendidly furnished, and I scarcely knew on what to rest my eyes, when, in a far corner of the room, I saw the Empress, who rose, and in a sweet gentle voice invited me to come nearer. Her youngest child was in her arms, and another playing at her feet, and at a little distance stood two ladies. I approached her with a profound bow. "You have succeeded in making this boy like you very much; I am glad of it for both your sakes," said she. "How do you propose to occupy him during the next four years, that these agreeable relations may continue between you?" I explained my views as far as possible, and the conversation soon turned from the schoolroom to Berlin, Germany, and Italy; at length a person was mentioned whom we had both known well, the Chancellor of the Halle University, Niemeyer, who frequented the Russian Court in her time. The conversation about him and his system continued for a time, the Empress repeatedly glancing at me with grave observant eyes, so that it seemed to me as if the shyness I at first felt had perhaps been replaced by

too great freedom. With all her reserve, there was more cordiality than animation in her mode of address, encouraging me to speak with the greatest unreserve. She understood the grave nature of the task that Lütke and I had undertaken, and expressed the hope that we should work together with energy and in harmony. The interview lasted about three-quarters of an hour, the young Constantine being delighted that his mother had given me so gracious a reception, and I really trusted that I had not at least left any unfavourable impression, so I went to work with a glad heart. We fully agreed that during the next few years the education of the boy should not essentially differ from that of others of his age; the man must be fashioned and cultivated earlier than the Prince, the Grand Duke, or the Lord High Admiral. In our intercourse therefore all formal titles were dismissed, and in short everything that particularly applied to a prince, the only privilege accorded him being that dishes were handed to him first. His table was simple and nourishing; he was not permitted to use the slightest harsh word to the servants, of which people in Russia are only too lavish. His day was strictly portioned out; he had only three hours of actual study, but a number of bodily and gymnastic exercises. All our conversations at dinner, and during our walks and hours of recreation, aimed at making the young man acquainted with burgher life in all its gradations and requirements; the views imparted by the palace and its seclusion being too often mistaken ones. It is possible to live with princes day by day for years, and

yet at last to find them imbued with the most singular errors. The story of a queen once asking why poor people, during a bread famine, could not eat cakes, plays, alas! too true a part in some palaces. It is certainly no invention that the Grand Duke Constantine Paulowitsch thought 1500 francs much too large a sum to give to an invalid officer for a journey to some baths, declaring that he would only give him 1000 ducats! This circumstance is particularly unfortunate, because dishonest people take advantage of such ignorance for their own selfish purposes; indeed there are those who purposely seek to maintain this want of intelligence. The Empress, in the course of the above conversation, several times repeated that the happiness of childhood must not be destroyed by premature gravity; and how true is this! The privileges of childhood, if repressed, are sure to be asserted at an unreasonable time. Moreover, royal children are too often presented with the most valuable objects, pictures and other rarities, which neither suit their inclinations nor their comprehension, and, instead of awakening a taste for art, produce entire indifference towards it. They are accustomed to be surrounded by works of art, and regard them as common household furniture, and feel neither joy nor gratitude when bestowed on them. I myself have observed that even when rare and costly objects are within their reach, they eagerly seize the most ordinary toys, like Achilles grasping his weapons. The Empress arranged that another young man should be educated with her son Constantine, who went through life with him like a brother. One very happy circumstance in his educa-

tion was his being the younger brother of three sisters, in whose society he passed some of his hours of recreation in the evening. Female society entails, even on the most impetuous boy, a certain deference and consideration which are invaluable in future life.

As yet Constantine spoke only two languages, Russian and English, German and French being equally unknown to him; to learn these two languages in a practical way, by conversing, reading, and writing, formed the commencement of our occupations, and in about eight months the boy read a German prose translation of the Odyssey for his own amusement, and with the liveliest interest. He made equal progress in French. He lived and breathed in the Homeric age, and both sought and found in the Hermitage all those pictures that represented Homeric or other mythical objects, repeating with the greatest animation what he had learned to his playfellows on Sundays, and urging them, in their plays, to perform scenes from the Trojan war. When we went to the country after Easter, another practical study began; we learned to distinguish the trees and wild plants around us, and to name them in three languages. What chiefly promoted his study of languages, and German in particular, was being destined to accompany his father and mother on their visit to Germany in 1835; his great ambition was to speak German with the Royal Family, his relations. There he made the acquaintance of Princess Mary, daughter of Prince William of Prussia, subsequently Queen of Bavaria, and offered to write to her from time to time in German. The Emperor expressly

prohibited classical studies being included in this Prince's education; he thought of the time when he was tormented by pedants to learn the Latin grammar instead of that of his own language, and wished to save his children from such an infliction. In fact Nicholas was less to be blamed for this than those instructors who had inspired him with such a horror of these studies; he was irritated the moment any one alluded to the subject.

Constantine, in the course of this summer, was gradually to be inured to the sea, and the Emperor's favourite abode, Peterhof, was admirably suited for that purpose. A small English yacht was presented to the boy, and named after him, which conveyed him backwards and forwards from Peterhof to Cronstadt, or to the shores of Finland, where he received on board the vessel his afternoon's instruction, and dined, and thus got a slight idea of sea life. Nothing further was attempted in 1835, but in the ensuing summer a frigate was manned for him, and the command of a squadron given to Admiral Lütke, who escorted the young voyager to Revel, Helsingfors, and Hangö Udd. This was beginning in earnest, and although the little expedition scarcely occupied three weeks, the young Constantine made sufficient acquaintance with the faithless ocean; the different vessels did not arrive at the same time at Revel, being damaged by gales; and another was obliged to retrace its way to Cronstadt, thus causing serious alarm in the commander, who remained long without any news of the missing vessel. The sea also imposes certain privations

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in eating and drinking quite unknown on land, and especially in a palace, and the monotony of a voyage leads to voluntary occupation to prevent the most deadly *ennui*. But above all, a sea life accustoms every one to order—that is, to the proper distribution and use of space and time, and naval men, even on land, are admitted to possess these important qualities. As these voyages succeeded each other every summer, from the Gulf of Finland into the Bothnian Gulf, and thence into the Baltic itself, the young seaman soon became acquainted with various countries and towns, and their peculiarities. Revel bears quite the physiognomy of our Hanseatic towns; Helsingfors, reached in the course of a few hours, is more a transcript of modern Petersburg.

As Constantine was accustomed to keep a diary from the time he was eight years old, his talent for observation was amply exercised. Tiresome as these sea excursions were for his tutor, they were useful and improving to the youth himself. The small spot Hangö-Udd, where Peter the Great gained a naval battle, had a powerful effect on his imagination. He was far from indifferent even to short absences from his parents, and during these few weeks he repeatedly wrote to them, though briefly and in an unfinished style, and these letters were no mere school exercises, but faithful descriptions of what he had seen. From his tenth year his duties on board became more serious; he went through all the work of a naval cadet, kept watch at midnight in rain and storm, and yet, when exempt from service, he continued his lessons. As the Latin tongue

was prohibited, the exact sciences were zealously studied, and much time and trouble bestowed on French in particular, in order that it might replace Latin. Constantine very early showed much inclination for the Fine Arts, music and drawing being cultivated with peculiar talent and success. The taste openly manifested by the Empress for painting and music upheld both pupil and teacher in these pursuits; her three daughters showed talent for both arts, which created a certain degree of emulation among the young people.

But a core was wanting to this instruction, a central point, which in our German schools is given by the ancient languages. Instead of this the boy was made acquainted with Nature in her various productions and phenomena, taught a thorough knowledge of the surface of the earth, to an extent, in fact, rarely reached in our schools, except in the most advanced classes. His information was greater than he could have acquired by the study of ancient languages, but it cannot be denied that the acquirement of the classics, when not conducted by one-sided pedants, cultivates the mind infinitely more, and accustoms youth to a certain degree of independence in work; awakening ideas more than natural history, and to the persevering student disclosing that world whose cultivation became the basis of our own. To the Russian nation especially the Latin tongue would be the key to the whole of Western Europe; the further development of the people at large in art and science, in society and politics, would raise them more rapidly to the level of

the enlightenment of the day, and emancipate them in many cases from being in thraldom to foreign countries. The Latin tongue is deeply interwoven with the course of our lives, and all scientific education, whether medicine, law, or theology, closely connected with it; nor is it excluded from the physical sciences either. At the end of three years the Emperor wished to examine the boy's progress; for this purpose he named the evenings of the next fortnight. The first evening was devoted to religion, taught by the Priest Bashanof; one evening was appointed for each language; and two for a short course of natural history; two for arithmetic and geometry; another for naval science and shipbuilding, in all of which the youth gained the approval of their Majesties, who, with a select society of the city, attended these examinations. Although this beginning differed widely from the European mode of instruction, still the original plan had been strictly followed out. All that could make the youth in after life a distinguished man was developed, and all that could call forth his interest in pure humanity, while neither the Prince nor the seaman were neglected; love for work was awakened, and a course of serious study not only wished for by him, but ardently desired. Intercourse also with the lower orders of society, a knowledge of the requirements of daily life were equally familiar to Constantine; he learned turning, planing, and cabinet work; he visited the workshops of tanners and printers, glass and china warehouses, beer and vinegar breweries, and by his questions endeavoured to gain information as to the nature and progress of their

work. A stay of three weeks in Moscow was chiefly devoted to a closer knowledge of the industrial products of that city, and it was not these alone that the young man tried to investigate in his thirst for knowledge; he also sought to become acquainted with the community of this ancient city of the Czar, the condition of the working classes and of the serfs; his heart was as deeply affected as his understanding occupied by this subject. He saw people who, in order to gain their daily bread, exposed themselves hourly to lose their lives by the preparation of arsenic, and at the same time he made acquaintance with families whose landed property and manufactories supplied them with regal wealth. He also saw other families whose head, born a serf, had begun life with a petty business and devoid of all education, but endowed with a sound understanding, whose accomplished sons had acquired importance, and whose grandsons had become of European reputation. Already this boy of ten years of age comprehended what an impetus would be given to the whole land by the personal freedom of its peasantry. The boy sketched such an interesting picture of all he had seen in writing to his mother, that she requested her daughters to visit some of the workshops of Russian industry. The proprietors of manufactories honoured by their presence, vied with each other in receiving such guests, not only with cordiality, but with splendour. The best that the land or labour could produce accompanied them home; and the proprietors themselves declared that by this attention of the illustrious family their business was promoted in

the country. A year previously, the life of man appeared under a very different aspect to the youthful Constantine. He was one evening listening with the greatest sympathy to the history of the misfortunes of a merchant, and burst into tears on hearing that at length, in order not to die of hunger, the latter was obliged to sell his favourite dog, his last possession. "What!" exclaimed he suddenly, "could none of his chamberlains, or other people, give him any money?" He now, after his stay in Moscow, understood the childish nature of his question. These expeditions were conducted in the happiest manner by the most profound connoisseur on Russian industry, the Academician von Hamel. Twenty years previously, he accompanied the Grand Dukes Nicholas and Michael through England, and in later years, in spite of his residing in Moscow, was favourably remembered by the Emperor. His extensive knowledge had been of importance even to Russian industry, which was munificently protected at that time by the Governor-General of Moscow, Prince Dmitri W. Golizyn, brother-in-law of Prince Wassiltschikof, another ornament to his country. The Empress had hitherto paid more attention to the education of her three daughters than to that of her sons; but the evening regularly brought them together, and her maternal eye discerned the progress of all her children, as well as the development of their characters. Nicholas, overburdened with work, did not desire that her consort should become the governess of her daughters; but though he strictly followed the course of their education, still he wished that the hours granted to him

from the burden of work, for amusement after dinner, and later in the evening, should be brightened and sweetened by the charm of his wife. A reigning family, and, above all, that of Russia, belongs to the whole kingdom, and only for a few rare moments to each other. While the Empress is not spared fatigues that far exceed the strength given her by nature, a portion of the public insisted on seeing her at every Court ball, and at the head of every society in the town, and also in the theatre and at promenades; and she complied with these demands so long as she had sufficient strength to support her amiable wish to please.

Although by this kind condescension she gained the admiration and praise of many, still there were others who blamed her as being incapable of a certain degree of solidity and earnestness; and yet, when her delicate health compelled her for weeks and months to renounce all participation in public amusements, people complained of her seclusion. It was no slight task for Alexandra to find suitable people to be near her person, for these so constantly change at Court. Her maids of honour, in the course of a year or two, left her invariably owing to their marriage,—an event that frequently not only removed them from Court, but also from Petersburg. The Empress herself lived wholly for the happiness of others, which she very often promoted by her own self-denial. Since the year 1834, however, a change took place in her immediate suite that entirely accorded with her wishes. Countess Katharina Tiesenhausen was appointed her lady of

honour and companion, and continued till her death in this situation. Nor was there ever any change in her sentiments. By her similarity of age she had in some degree more sympathy with her illustrious mistress than the others, and also by the varied acquirements she had stored up in travelling, but which she as modestly concealed from the world at large as Alexandra herself did her own acquirements. The sister of this lady, Countess Ficquelmont, wife of the Austrian Ambassador, assumed the highest position among the diplomatic corps of that period.

Countess Tiesenhausen was strict in principle without being narrow-minded, entertaining, eager to acquire information, and well acquainted with the world. She had the talent quickly to appropriate the substance of a book, and to impart its most essential portion to her royal mistress. She was acute in judging a person according to their real value, and a wise adviser of the Empress, controlling her good-natured generosity. She knew how to cheer her on a sick-bed, to amuse her in the carriage when travelling, and to share both her joys and sorrows. She served her with true devotion, and obtained access for those who wished to have an interview with the Imperial lady.

A young lady was at this time placed about the Empress—Pauline von Barthenief, who did not belong to any great Russian family, and could in no degree emulate Countess Tiesenhausen in diversity of knowledge; but her beautiful voice paved the way for her to Imperial favour, which she continued to enjoy till the death of Alexandra. The Empress took delight in re-

calling those evenings when Madame Sontag appeared as Desdemona in the Court theatre, and still more those occasions when her wondrous voice was heard, in the presence of her limited family circle, in the cabinet of the Empress, who was as susceptible to good music and singing as to painting. Her cabinet was adorned with many valuables that dazzled the eye; but the greatest of all her treasures were the St. John of Domenichino and a Holy Family by Murillo, which caused connoisseurs to forget all else. In her youthful as well as in her later years, it seemed indispensable to her to pass a little time at the piano, in order to gain that repose of mind that music alone confers; but above all she was susceptible to the charm of singing, that seems to make its way from heart to heart. Madame Sontag, therefore, remained in her memory as a meteor she could never forget, and Pauline Barthenief now replaced her. Any deficiency in musical skill or execution was atoned for by the incomparable sweetness of her rare voice, which surpassed even that of Madame Sontag. This young lady was therefore appointed Lady of the Palace,—a position inferior to that of the Court ladies, but giving her access to the cabinet of the Empress, whose approval she not only gained by her talent, but also by the genuine feminine modesty which she always displayed. In this case, as in a hundred others, their Majesties proved how little value they attached to forms and ceremonies. In a short time she was appointed Maid of Honour, with all the privileges of that position.

A third lady who, since 1834, frequented the Court,

and formed the ornament of the small Court soirées, was Princess Lieven. Both in rank and talent of every kind she immeasurably surpassed the two ladies we have named as being in the personal service of the Empress. She had been for nearly thirty years wife of the Russian Minister in London, and come into contact with the whole of European diplomacy; and both by her pen and her conversation, as well as by her great personal influence, acquired a distinguished name as the first political star of her day. No comparison can, therefore, be drawn between her and the other ladies of the Empress, in whose presence she appeared with the most perfect self-possession. It seemed as if she wished to assume the place of her late mother-in-law at Court, that same old Princess Lieven, who never made an enemy, and never lost a friend. Although of a very different nature from the latter, she won the same consideration and the same respect; indeed, her appearance, both in society and at Court, was heralded by great fame. But the Princess had lived too long in foreign countries, and not having from nature a single drop of Russian blood in her veins, she did not enjoy this novel atmosphere as she had done that of London. Her liberal views were not so appreciated as in other countries, and her immediate society did not pay her the homage she had been accustomed to receive in other parts of Europe. Those, in particular, who, by their rank and position, ought to have been most intimate with her, remained estranged: and circumstances did not permit her to have so brilliant a *salon* as formerly in London, and more recently in Paris. Her

conversation was exclusively political, and in Petersburg, in this field, she neither found eager opponents nor satellites of her opinions, as in other countries. The society of the capital did not seem fully to understand her, and, in spite of her many attractions, her house was called "the Political Exchange," where political scions of the third class, without importance or business, resorted. She therefore frequented the Court more than the capital, and assumed a higher position there than her husband.

The conversation of the Princess was most fascinating; she discussed the inner social condition of England and France, the secret springs of individual Cabinets and their members, the course of negotiations, and those appointed to conduct them. Scarcely any diplomatist could vie with her in information, nor in masterly expositions, both in speaking and writing. Her mode of conversing was adapted to men of mature thought,—to diplomatists, and, above all, politicians, who listened to her as devoutly as formerly King Numa to Egeria. But, for genuinely feminine natures, her conversation became rather fatiguing, for with much intellect she was devoid of sociability, and certainly not free from a certain degree of ostentation that made her unpopular with many. The Empress was never devoid of sympathy for the politics of the day, but this arose more from that feeling of pure interest in humanity which benevolence imposes on us all; but besides the goodness of her heart, her historical knowledge also contributed to this,—a branch of study in which the illustrious lady was better versed than people were aware of. The

information of Princess Lieven embraced the present in all its extent, but she had no historical depth, while Alexandra was interested in all historical investigations, at however remote a period. She read with the most lively sympathy the defence of Wallenstein, by Forster, and also the lives of the Queens Elizabeth and Mary Stuart, by Raumer; and she was anxious to learn what fame Niebuhr had acquired by his Roman History. She was well acquainted with the recent historical works of France and Germany, and profound was her knowledge of the genealogical connection between the reigning families of Germany and Europe. The inner nature of these two ladies was, therefore, very differently constituted; but a truly feminine deportment, and the charm that accompanies every word, imparting greater dignity even to mature age, were possessed by both in the highest degree. Any subordinate part was utterly out of the question for the Princess, and in the absence of the Court she became a female viceroy, like Prince Golizyn, only infinitely more energetic. Conspicuous as was the intellect of the Princess, still, after prolonged intercourse with her, the one-sidedness was to be lamented that excluded her from all conversation not political,—the result of her eager and undivided sympathy with diplomatic affairs, for she was more richly gifted by nature than most people, and in the period of her youthful beauty, her musical talent was as much admired as subsequently the flow of her conversation. Princess Lieven only remained one year in Petersburg, and left it with rooted grief of heart. Not only did her husband die in Rome,

but two of her sons were also buried in Petersburg, and from that day she never more saw the capital.

In the year 1833, a young German lady was presented to Alexandra, who, from her beauty and intellect, was an object of universal admiration in Bavaria, her fatherland—Baroness Krüdener, *née* Lerchenfeld, whose brother was Bavarian Minister at the Neva. Baron Krüdener, at that time only Secretary to the Russian Embassy in Munich, was an unpretending man, and his character rather induced him to shun than to seek the Court, and, indeed, his subordinate position by no means entitled him to such an honour. The Baroness, however, was far too striking a person not to be remarked; their Majesties both remarked her, and expressed a wish to become acquainted with her. A closer knowledge of the Baroness showed how well she was fitted for the society of the Empress, while her conversation fascinated and attracted even the Emperor himself. In the height of the highest regions the gravity of life is too apt to brood in dark clouds over the furrowed brows; the kindly home life that, with all its charm, confers happiness on a simple burgher family, often disappears in that of high dignitaries and ministers, and in the vicinity of majesty deadly *ennui* often prevails. A lady, therefore, who, in the midst of such brilliant splendours, never lost her self-possession, and developed all her fascinations in an easy and unembarrassed manner, was indeed a boon to be highly estimated. But the charming Baroness had only come to Petersburg to visit her brother; thus she remained only a short time, and her sole claim to enter the most select Court

circle was her amiability. When the Baroness shortly afterwards returned to Bavaria, both their Majesties very much missed her society. On this occasion the Emperor was obliged to allow the wish of his consort, and indeed his own also, to remain unfulfilled; the sympathies of both were usually identical in such matters. Two years later, however, by a happy chance, they met the Baroness in Prague, and this time the invalid Empress declared that the permanent society of this lady was indispensable to her. Means were thought of to appoint the Baron to some post in Petersburg, that would also confer on his wife the *entrée* to the Imperial apartments. Baron Krüdener became a Chamberlain, and a Counsellor in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and was so richly endowed by the Emperor, that he could entertain on equal terms with other persons attached to the Court, while his wife was always admitted by Alexandra on the footing of a friend. Beauty is one of the gifts of God, recognised by every one as a most efficient power, to which every age does homage. But, besides her natural charm, the Baroness possessed the most rare amiability, social elegance, and feminine gentleness; there was something delightful even in her voice, and with such gifts she could not fail to win the hearts of all. She appeared in Petersburg in the year 1826, and remained on the most intimate terms with the Empress for about eight years. Such a position drew many eyes upon her, not excluding those envious ones too apt to pursue a foreigner; on the other hand, her goodness and mediation were often appealed to, and the many marks of homage she received were, per-

haps, caused fully as much by her power as by her beauty. Her son, the same age as the Grand Duke Constantine, was appointed his comrade in the navy, and spent all his time for several years with the Imperial Princes. There was no society at that time in which the Baroness did not shine with surpassing lustre.

The military profession, however, and its duties, parades, and manœuvres, claimed special consideration from the Empress. Born in a military state, educated amid the clash of weapons, such spectacles were neither strange nor unpleasing to her, and, as Empress, she was Chief of the Chevalier Regiment of Guards. She appeared at the grand May reviews at Marsfeld in Petersburg, in a gala gold carriage, with her whole Court retinue; and on her birthday, July 1st, in Peterhof, she herself distributed to her regiment the decorations she intended for them; and the reader may remember that, when Grand Duchess, she lived in the camp of Krasnoe-Selò with her husband. But, even when engaged in distant military duties, Nicholas could not bear to be absent from his wife, and her magic influence. As soon as her strength permitted, she accompanied her husband, and in 1828 passed the summer in Odessa, close to the seat of war. In the year 1835, she went with her son Constantine and her daughter Olga to the great reviews at Kalisch, the most singular spectacle of our century, and her task was the most difficult and varied of all. From Peterhof, where she passed the summer, in lovely weather, on the 1st July, her birthday, after witnessing the celebrated illumination of the gardens, she went

with both her children, in the middle of August, to Fischbach, in Silesia, where her large circle of relations received her with open arms. But her rest did not long continue, for, after a very few days, the whole of the Imperial and Royal Courts repaired to Leignitz, in the environs of which one of the grandest manœuvres was to be held. Princes had come thither from most German States, and in order to receive them worthily, all the palaces and country seats in the vicinity were put under contribution. The Emperor and King went from here to Krieblowitz, to visit the monument of Field-Marshal Prince Blucher. The time of the illustrious Alexandra was not only claimed by family ties, but still more by the sincere homage shown her by the inhabitants, both of the country and the towns, who exhausted their resources in heaping attentions on her. These balls, concerts, serenades, illuminations, and fireworks could not delight the inhabitants of these petty towns more than the Empress, who, in spite of fatigue, appeared wherever she was expected. Similar festivities were repeated in Breslau, and yet Alexandra's most cherished wish was to pass a few happy hours with her relations, after so long a severance, and to enjoy beautiful nature in Silesia, in all its peculiar forms. The mode of life in Silesia was indeed simple, compared to that in Kalisch, where the Emperor and Empress arrived before the other royal guests. For, in accordance with ancient usages, they were obliged to go to meet the King, and receive him sumptuously in the palace at Kalisch. The regiment called "The King of Prussia" was stationed there, besides a corp of 1600 musicians, to greet the

ruler of Prussia in a fitting manner. What a spectacle did the environs present; as far as the eye could reach, a city was to be seen, constructed of canvas tents, enlivened by the varied and vast tumult of a camp. A Belvidere was erected, from which this surging sea could be contemplated. The day occupied and amused the eye, and the evening the ear; for as soon as these motley splendours had vanished in the darkness, the tones of a military band resounded, 1600 in number, rockets rose in the air, and a cannon gave the signal for prayer to an army corps of 60,000 men. Even strangers heard with reverence and emotion the well-known touching melody by Bartnjansky, recalling Mozart, and also the old Italian school. But, at the close of these solemn strains, on every side was heard the national Russian hymn, in all its purity, very often accompanied by clarionets and tambourines. An expedition through the camp in the day-time was not less amusing than the Coronation in Moscow. Here were to be seen Cossacks of the line, Circassians, Grusimans, Tscherkessen, and Mussulmans, in every imaginable costume, primitive-looking splendid forms, with sunburnt faces, and glossy black hair and beards, armed with scimitars, pistols, and daggers, their heads covered by turbans or fur caps, others wore glittering silver helmets, and coats-of-mail made of links of steel, and while some invoked Allah, from the lips of others resounded hurrahs. The little horses carried their riders with the speed of gazelles over the plain, and the skill of the mountaineers astonished the spectators even more than European feats of dexterity in horsemanship. For the entertainment of

the illustrious guests present, and also foreign generals and inquisitive travellers, a sham fight was got up, the standard to be captured being planted at Ezerum, till the battle became so serious that the Padischah (the Emperor) was obliged to separate the troops. Most of these had never seen the Czar, but he was at once recognised by his stately figure, majestic bearing, and despotic glance, as he approached them on foot, and by a motion of his hand checked their advance. The multifarious races, and the singular foreign countenances, involuntarily reminded the spectator of Xerxes' vast army. On fête-days in the camp, the Empress felt bound to appear, so she arrived on horseback at the head of her regiment, in a green riding-habit and a white Russian cap, leading the troops past their Majesties, and saluting them. The fair leader of this regiment, after changing her dress, had still a variety of parts to perform; she owed filial duty to the King, which she always fulfilled with the utmost tenderness; she was also the mother of her children, whom her eye carefully watched in these stirring days; the wife of the Czar, at whose summons this army had assembled, and also the hostess of numbers of illustrious guests.

While the god of war displayed so much pomp and splendour, and such various nationalities, the peaceful arts of Europe also hastened hither, and built their temple near the tents. After fatiguing dusty days, the most illustrious guests, as well as the officers of both camps, assembled in the theatre in the evening, and the best comic actors of the Berlin stage cast peaceful squibs, and jests and gibes into the pit, crowded with

soldiers. Spanish and Polish national dancers enchanted by their ease and grace, as much as during the day the little horses of the Caucasus, darting along with the speed of an arrow, while the most charming voices vied with each other and with the nightingales. On many evenings the theatre was closed, and a select portion of the society assembled in the *salon* of Alexandra to enjoy pleasant conversation. The Russian and Prussian Courts, by the connecting link of the Empress, were well adapted to introduce a more elevated tone into this society, and wholly to banish the frigid stiffness of earlier times. On the other hand, the Russian and Prussian armies not only made closer acquaintance with each other, showing proper respect for their mutual national peculiarities, but they both learned in the midst of a camp how to enjoy those higher charms of life that peace alone can bestow. The close of these warlike spectacles was not devoid of significance and importance; on the last day they stormed the Palace of Kalisch, and at the moment when, after the victory, plunder and rapine were about to ensue, the Empress appeared on the balcony of the Palace, in her brightest mission — that of an Angel of Peace. Thus Alexandra introduced, in many outward forms, closely connected with Court life, intellect, life, and significance.

The Imperial family arrived again in Zarskoe-Selò late in the autumn, well and happy; the health of Alexandra remained unaffected during the ensuing winter and summer; the happiness of domestic life was now yearly interrupted by the journeys of the Emperor into the

interior of his kingdom, but the autumn of 1836 was sadly disturbed by the alarming intelligence of an accident that had befallen him. He quitted his summer residence at the beginning of August, and was hurrying forward by Moscow, Nischnei-Novgorod, Kasan, Limbirsk, and Pensa, in order to reach Warsaw from thence by the middle of September. All went on well till he arrived at Pensa, on August 25th, although every one who saw the Czar travelling in the interior of the kingdom trembled for his life. On a dark night in August (26th), he continued his journey beyond Pensa in a calèche, when the weary and almost exhausted Emperor, as well as Count Benkendorf, fell sound asleep. About one o'clock in the morning they were startled by cries of terror from the coachman and outriders; the horses having run away in defiance of all human strength, till at last the calèche, coming in contact with a heap of stones on the road, was upset with a crash; Count Benkendorf was flung on the high road unhurt, but the Emperor remained still and mute, the coachman and valet lying close to the carriage, under the fallen horses.

"Get out, your Majesty," said Benkendorf to Nicholas, who, however, to the horror of his fellow-traveller, made no answer. The Count shuddered, and seizing his hand, discovered that he was lying in a swoon, or nearly so. At length he recovered consciousness, and was led by the Count to a ditch on the road-side, where he seated himself, wrapped in his cloak, and after a long pause, said,—

"I feel sure that my collar-bone is broken; but,"

added he, "let us do nothing further till we have implored the aid of God."

The Count would fain have stayed with the Emperor, but the cries of terror and anguish of the valet were heartrending, and as Benkendorf was hurrying to his assistance, there came past, as if sent by Providence, a discharged soldier, his breast covered with medals, who asked in alarm who had been upset.

"Your Emperor," said Benkendorf; "stay with him till I return."

The coachman lay without any sign of life; the valet was covered with blood. The Count had never been in so distressing a position, but he did not lose his presence of mind. He sent off the groom who accompanied the imperial calèche in a telega to the nearest station, five versts distant, the little town of Tschembar, to procure another carriage and to fetch a doctor. Meanwhile Nicholas revived, and eagerly desired the veteran soldier by his side to go and assist the groaning valet. But in a few minutes he fainted again, and remained lying on the damp bare ground.

What a melancholy spectacle of human weakness! The mightiest of all rulers, at whose glance innumerable people bowed down, lies powerless, in the gloom of night, in a desolate corner of his kingdom, watched over by one of the poorest of his subjects; his will is now as weak as his limbs, while he feels and shares the power of fate with his servants; his commands are reduced to the most simple wishes, yet he must wait with patience even for their fulfilment; but though helpless and stretched on the cold ground, he remains

true to his character, and thinks more of the unfortunate servant than of himself, and waits for help with Christian resignation. After an hour of painful expectation, the groom returned with the carriage and the surgeon from Tschembar; the Emperor ordered him to go to the assistance of the valet and coachman, and entering the calèche drove on to the little town. But in a few minutes the motion of the carriage caused him such intolerable pain, that he preferred going the rest of the way on foot. At the gates he was met by the principal magistrate, in deep concern to see the mighty Czar for the first time in his life under such melancholy circumstances, and at such an unusual hour, and to be compelled to receive him in a place devoid of all comfort and convenience for travellers—no inn, no town-hall, no senate-house! the only building that he could offer as a refuge being the school. Benkendorf had already preceded them, and after removing the benches, lit up the lowly room.

The Czar arrived quite exhausted in this wooden building; first wrote a long amusing letter to his wife, gave all the most pressing orders to Adjutant-General Adlerberg, who had meanwhile arrived with a doctor, and not till all business was completed did he turn to Arndt, saying,—"Now it is your turn; here is my arm, examine it, and do what is necessary." The two surgeons found the left collar-bone broken, but not till afterwards discovered that a rib was also broken. While they were bandaging him, he began to jest with those standing round about his new abode, and his own disaster. Next morning the house was

thronged with the whole population of the little town, and continued to be so day and night during the Emperor's stay there; a few days afterwards came pouring in from the environs all that could serve for the invalid's personal use—fruit, flowers, even furniture and provisions; for everything was wanting, so everything was welcome. The soldiers on leave left their villages, wishing to be allowed to offer their services to the Emperor, who discovered that though his realm was poor in convenient towns, his people were richer than all the rest of Europe in the capability of self-sacrifice.

Nicholas's state of health became in a few days serious and critical; besides broken bones, he had another source of severe suffering, his good-humour gradually subsided into a morose mood, increased by the total want of every necessary comfort. He began to work as if in his own cabinet, read through all the papers forwarded to him, summoned to his presence several chiefs of corps of the Southern Army, Admiral Lazaref, and Count Witt, skimmed some novels, and closely studied all the news in the papers, but his depression daily increased; for the heat of this nook, under a straw-covered roof, where every current of air must be carefully avoided, became quite intolerable, and he seemed to himself to be a prisoner in chains, and did not begin to revive till the surgeons allowed him to take a walk in the court. As the cure proceeded more slowly than he wished, his ill-humour was first vented on his doctors, but latterly on his whole suite. The medical men therefore agreed to allow their patient to set out on his journey before the three weeks had

elapsed which the cure required, in the hopes of tranquillizing him. He was informed of their decision, and of the day fixed for his journey, but even this appeared to him too long deferred, and he declared to Count Benkendorf, "I intend to set off to-morrow early, at nine o'clock, and if the doctors oppose me, I will go alone on foot." After this resolve, he occupied his last day in Tschembar by rewarding all those who had been of service to him.

Six days after the accident, the Empress in Zarskoe-Selò and the capital were apprised of it. What terror! What a new and difficult task for the illustrious lady! Although Nicholas had written to her in the most cheerful spirit, still he had cause to fear that the tenderness of his wife would bring her to Tschembar; but such a journey would have thrown the whole kingdom into confusion, and made the state of her health more alarming than that of the Emperor himself. With rare self-command, Alexandra contrived to conceal from the population her terrible alarm; she appeared in the city the day after as friendly as ever; she invited a number of persons to Zarskoe-Selò, declaring the reports to be more favourable than in truth they were; indeed she subsequently heard from her husband himself that on the sixth or seventh day of his illness he had been prepared for death by a priest. At that epoch telegraphs did not convey intelligence with lightning speed from one end of the kingdom to the other, and no express messenger could travel faster than the Emperor; his appearance, therefore, in his autumn residence was sudden and unexpected, and the

joy of the people loud and sincere; but now, in his secluded country Palace, he allowed himself twenty days of entire rest to complete his cure, and appeared for the first time in his capital on the 8th October, without any trace of the accident he had met with.

CHAPTER IV.

PETERHOF.

In none of the many palaces in the city or in the country was the splendour of the Imperial Court so closely combined with the most simple and retired domestic life as in this little town. We must therefore describe it more minutely, without, however, dwelling at too great length on the many objects it contains. Much as the Grand Duchess Alexandra had been enchanted with the view of the sea, of the gardens and fountains, quite as much was the Empress's eye offended by much that she saw. The immediate vicinity of the palace, the gardens, and the magnificent little town of Peterhof, were a desolate wilderness, in which on hot summer days the wind blew clouds of dust mountains high; the wooden houses of the gentry formed the most painful contrast to the palace, and beside the most brilliant Court equipages were to be seen coachmen in rags driving the different officials, and even the ministers were obliged to occupy miserable dwellings. The Russians are inured to such things, and do not heed them, but they revolt the stranger, so Alexandra prevailed on her husband to introduce more harmony into the whole. After thirty years of toilsome labour,

Peterhof in this manner became the most enchanting spot perhaps in the whole of Russia, so we shall try to make a pilgrimage with our reader through this courtly residence, in its latest development.

Three ways lead to it—by water, by rail, and by the old highway. We choose the latter. This road offers all the way from the capital to Peterhof a succession of fine country-houses and gardens, with no other species of tree, however, than birches and pines. The sea to the right hand appears and is hidden by turns, and at last we reach the barrier and the guard-house that mark the commencement of the Emperor's property; the road runs straight through the centre of the place, about a league in length, but we turn to the left on reaching the barrier into a park of gloomy aspect, resembling, with its ancient trees, a primeval forest, through which walks have been cut. Some stray individuals seek shade and coolness here on hot days, otherwise it is generally solitary and deserted, serving only as the abode of falcons, kites, and crows; at some considerable distance we arrive at a pleasant lake, with islands, cottages, and Swiss châlets; otherwise cultivation has done nothing for the spot; it is like a reminiscence of the olden time, when this wood was inhabited solely by wolves and foxes. From the water a road leads to the lower part of the petty town, which only within the last few years has been adorned with a church and gilt dome, and some houses built of stone. The space before the church is dead and deserted, and the adjoining streets also, so we pass along with indifference to the left of the high-road, and enter a second garden. At

first sight we feel as if transported a hundred miles towards the south; it is ornamented by deciduous trees, traversed by flowing waters, on which are islands adorned with pretty little palaces, and a succession of columns and Belvideres. The most lovely flowers seem to grow wild here, reminding us of the Borromean Islands. In these winding paths, the aristocratic world of the Court are to be seen driving, at every hour of the day, in open calèches. To resist a visit to one of these islands is impossible, and a boat conveys us quickly across. The interior of this little palace is intended for *one* family only, as the largest room cannot hold more than ten people: it owes its origin to the domestic inclinations of the Emperor and the Empress, who in the morning or evening wish to enjoy each other's society exclusively for half-an-hour. We climb the Belvidere, and behold with astonishment the singular mixture of town and country, of palaces and villages, woods and gardens, lakes and islands, that bear the name of Peterhof. When our eyes stray beyond it, we perceive the most dismal plains close by, and are amazed at what the will of Nicholas and the taste of Alexandra have created here, as if by witchcraft. From this garden we cross over a brook, and enter the Cadet Camp, a town of tents—erected for the summer, enlivened by the most motley variety of uniforms. When the Czar appears among these martial youths, he is no longer the stern Autocrat of all the Russias, he is the father of a numerous family of soldiers, and these cadets spring forward to meet him with more confidence and cordiality than perhaps

his own kindred at home. He takes part in their exercises and their sports, visits their tents, tastes the food at their table, and summons a certain number to measure their strength against his. A grand stately park adjoins the Cadet Camp, justly called the English garden; its palace, its avenues of trees, the whole arrangements, with a pack of hounds and a pheasantry, transport the wanderer far away from the Russian camp, and gloomy primeval forests, into England. This spot offers the same shade and coolness as those ancient woods; but its aspect is pleasing and romantic. In June especially it is filled with the songs of innumerable nightingales, and the bright summer nights here have an inexpressible charm. It is of so great an extent that it might adorn one of the larger German capitals; so it looks rather deserted. Philosophers, poets, and artists seldom visit this spot; but in the twilight of a Russian night it is the scene of many an adventure. The inquiring stranger is anxious above all to visit the palace, which offers both amusement and instruction, by means of its spacious picture-gallery, affording hours of amusement. It is not the artistic but the historical interest of the portraits that bestows value on this collection. Catherine the Second caused all her crowned contemporaries to send her their portraits; and thus we find here historical treasures, in the shape of portraits, dating seventy years before the close of the last century. Here we see Frederick William the Third as a child, with his father and Frederick the Great, Maria Theresa and Joseph the Second, Caroline Matilda of Denmark, the younger brothers of Louis the

Sixteenth, and even the Sultan and the Pope. Those who do not feel at home among those forms of other days may visit the menagerie, where, among other animals, a herd of wolves gnash their teeth at the stranger, but start back timidly as soon as the Jäger appears with his stick. At the back of this park is an alder wood, traversed by a brook, which flows through the grounds. By following its course out of the garden, we come into a small hollow, or rather dell, across which a bridge is thrown, connecting the upper and lower town. The Empress never drove over this bridge without pausing here to admire the alders by the brook. By her desire the whole of this dell, above and below, is adorned with the most beautiful turf, and groups of trees and flowers, and intersected by paths in all directions. Thus was completed an embellishment that would scarcely have been remarked in German towns, but proved most ornamental to this desolate village. We find ourselves on the side where the palace stands, and drive along a good high-road, past the Imperial dwelling up a gentle acclivity. To our left, the old Dutch garden slopes down to the sea. It is the work of Peter the Great's own hands, and none of his successors have ventured to make any change. The straight avenues were marked out by himself, the oaks and elms planted by his own hands. Here we perceive a modest Dutch cottage close to a square pond. At twelve o'clock at noon a bell rings, summoning its inhabitants—carps—to the shore to be fed, and people assemble on the opposite bank to see this spectacle. The greatest object of interest is certainly

the small house adjoining, once inhabited by Peter himself, when he gave up his palace to his Court attendants. All this seems to lead us back to the first ten years of the eighteenth century; and we are also shown the clumsy chairs, tables, benches, and beds that the great man manufactured; the simple clothes he wore are also preserved here like sacred relics. Straight-cut avenues, traversed by others at right angles, divide the garden into a number of little quadrangles, to its furthest extremity, marked by a stone wall. After crossing the canal leading down from the palace, we draw near a second favourite resort of Peter the Great, called *Mon Plaisir*, assuredly the most charming spot in the whole place. It is a garden encompassed by strong hedges overtopped by high shady oaks and other trees, without any turf, but adorned with innumerable flower-beds and several fountains, while a number of seats invite the wanderer to peaceful repose. It is as if the North and the South here united their best gifts. In the background of this garden stands a lowly Dutch house, with the furniture of the period and day of this great and unpretending man, and adjoining it a kitchen with Dutch utensils, all denoting burgher simplicity. Peter the First passed through every social gradation in rank; he was a carpenter and a sailor, a soldier and an officer, up to the Imperial dignity; and these experiences were in him the source of his creative power. At the back of this house we find ourselves close by the shore of the Finland Gulf, miles broad; stone benches under spreading lime-trees offer us great enjoyment of the marvel-

lous view, which Peter dreamed of, but did not live to witness. To the right lies the giant city, with its golden and sky-blue domes; to the left is Cronstadt, where a forest of masts seems swimming on the sea; opposite lies the coast of Finland, bearing the same aspect as in Peter's day; but on its watery surface steamboats now ply between Cronstadt, Peterhof, and Petersburg. An evening in June, in the longest summer days on this shore, is incomparably lovely. We see the sun dip into the sea before our eyes, but we expect night in vain. Even at midnight, the pure clear light of day, a cloudless but starless sky above, shines faintly on the watery mirror, and keeps the weary eyes waking. The inhabitants of the north find the greatest charm of the whole year in these bright nights, and even to a stranger this extraordinary spectacle is an object of interest. The Imperial family seldom visit this little paradise, for they would be besieged by the population. It is magnanimous enough in them to give up such a spot to the multitude.

A short path leads us from here to the wall that divides the old Dutch gardens from Alexandria, the abode of Nicholas and his wife. We already mentioned that, on the day before her journey to Taganrog, Alexander presented his brother with this property. At that time it was little more than a marshy meadow, which, with its gentle acclivity, extended down to the sea, the lower part forming a willow plantation, and the upper without any buildings. Here the Emperor Nicholas first caused a simple house of two storeys to be built, and lived in it for the next few years with his

five children. There was no room even for servants, who were obliged to come from the old palace every morning. The rooms are small, and even the *salon* where they receive cannot conveniently hold twenty persons. Compared with Peter's abode, it is indeed a comfortable house, suited to a family in good circumstances, charmingly furnished in accordance with the ideas of the nineteenth century, and the requirements of a private gentleman, but it does not go beyond this; and the stranger who sees it in the absence of the Court, can scarcely imagine that it is intended for the ruler of seventy millions of people; but it gave the Emperor an opportunity of being alone with his family for a short time during his busy day, and in the morning to breathe fresh sea-breezes on the little height, and not to be tormented during the day by burdensome affairs. With the exception of the tutors of the Imperial children, and physicians, no one found admission on business; the gates were guarded by sentries, and only ladies who came to visit the Empress were admitted. When, however, owing to the increase of their family, the house became too small, an adjacent farm was metamorphosed into an abode for the heir-apparent; while another house at the entrance of the garden was made use of for the second son Constantine, and others were built for the younger branches. The plantation throve, and at the end of Nicholas's reign it had become a beautiful garden, with several family dwellings. A Greek chapel, in the Gothic style, had been long since built at the entrance of the garden, where religious services were held when the

delicate Alexandra had not strength to drive to the distant large palace. It is only a few steps from the Imperial abode to the gate and barrier of Peterhof, and the wanderer again finds himself on the line whence he first diverged from the highway. The pleasure-grounds that we have described are at most from three to four versts in length, and scarcely two versts in breadth. But by Nicholas it was extended on every side, and embellished, so that its whole circumference was not inferior to that of the German principality of Lichtenstein. From Alexandria, a good road leads through the garden to the old palace; and we must also pursue this way in order to see what Nicholas has accomplished in the vicinity.

Between Alexandria and the old palace, in Alexander's time, a desolate waste existed, dotted over with little wooden houses for the suite, insignificant both in their exterior and interior. Now we see by the side of the road a succession of Gothic buildings, destined for the accommodation of Court ladies and gentlemen and Court officials. It must be confessed that the Emperor has done more for his guests than for himself and his family. These dwellings contain every comfort that a family can desire—balconies with flowers, verandahs, and a little garden before each entrance. Here a large house is set apart for the reception of ministers, another for adjutants, as well as for the High-Chamberlain, and the highest Court dignitaries. The old palace, with its appendages, is a town in itself, chiefly inhabited by Excellencies, and Serene and Royal Highnesses. When the Emperor's love for the Gothic

was perceived, in a short time a mass of country-houses in that style sprang up round the palace—many indeed built of wood, that they might be inhabited as quickly as possible. And this singular whimsical taste prevailed in Petersburg at the very time when the national spirit was striving to abolish all that was foreign; but on the aboriginal inhabitants of Peterhof this had not the smallest influence. The citizens continued on both sides of the palace in their one-storeyed log-houses, and adhered faithfully and honestly to their national peculiarities, which the higher classes of the nobility only affected to do. The lavish generosity of the Court was seen in its highest lustre in Peterhof; the entire suite, and indeed several hundreds of persons besides, being not only comfortably and luxuriously lodged, but an Imperial equipage placed at the disposal of each, and also the necessary attendants; and besides being supplied with provisions in their own houses, there was also a Lord Marshal's table, provided like that of Lucullus, which on high festivals, or particular occasions, included from three to four hundred persons. The Imperial family did not participate in these splendours, but remained in the seclusion of Alexandria.

The Court provides its guests and suite with a singular kind of equipage for excursions, which is unknown to the rest of Europe. They are called *Lines*, and consist of benches with cushions, four wheels, with a back in the middle, so that on each side four persons can sit in a row beside each other. It is used for evening drives in the lower garden. The Emperor contributed most liberally to those Court retainers who

wished to build in Peterhof, as he not only gave them the ground to build on, but a field for a large garden; all were to have a share in his favourite creation, and a couple of months' residence in Peterhof in summer was to atone for the privations imposed by the late spring and the damp cold autumn. The weather was generally favourable during the stay at Peterhof, as if invited to this courtly circle, and wishing to appear in the best light. Nicholas therefore used to call fine weather, a Peterhof sky. Nowhere was he in a more cheerful mood, and his brow at Peterhof was as different from that in the Winter Palace as summer and winter. But Peterhof was not only embellished and remodelled, it was also enlarged and extended in every direction.

A private garden adjoined that of Alexandria, belonging to the Mjatlef family, adorned with a stately palace and a beautifully laid out park; the Emperor Alexander had already proposed to buy it for his brother, but gave up the idea from the high price. Nicholas purchased it, and presented it to his wife. When the heir-apparent and his sister Marie were both married, Alexandria, with its small adjacent houses, no longer sufficed, so they bought for the Grand Duchess Marie and her husband (the Duke of Leuchtenberg) a charming garden at the other end of Peterhof, belonging to the Narischkin family, and there the Emperor built for his daughter a spacious house, with a lovely view of the sea. Between Peterhof and this villa, called Sergiefskoe, stood a charming small dwelling, Nicholas's own special country residence. They

went there sometimes to drink tea in the evening, or gave it up to one of the families who always followed in their train. The extent of Imperial Peterhof along the sea was nearly double what it had formerly been, but all this did not suffice for the Emperor; on the land side also the pleasure-grounds were to be widened. From the old palace garden a road lay between the Cadet Camp and the islands, which led to a gentle rising ground, several versts in width; a rivulet lends a peculiar charm to this path, and on it two villas were built, at a little distance from each other, in the Italian style; both small, and destined for the reception of the highest members of the Imperial family. Groups of fine trees met the pilgrim's eye, and like a reminiscence of German meadows, a mill or a brook surprised the spectator, more, however, as pleasing objects than for any practical purpose. Beside the largest of the two villas, the brook widens into a little lake, and its banks are surrounded by forest trees. Between the lake and the house are banks of flowers, which can be arranged as seats of a theatre, of course for a limited society. Here Nicholas once had the ballet of "Ondine" performed on the water for Alexandra. During the longest days of the year, after sunset, in the singular light of a Northern sky, woods and waters were the stage of the ballet, and the distance of the spectators such, that the boats in which the nymphs appeared were invisible, and the whole dance seemed to hover over the water. On the summit of the acclivity stands a handsome villa, also much frequented by the people. It commands the finest and

most extensive prospect over land and sea, scarcely to be equalled in all Europe. The coast of Finland stretches before the eyes of the spectator from Petersburg to far beyond Cronstadt, in an expansion of many versts, without any variety, like the wooden frame of a long, broad mirror; Peterhof itself, which lies contiguous, is hidden in the gardens, and the golden cupolas of the palace and town churches alone betray its vicinity. The coast of Finland, in its vast extent, without any rising grounds, without either towns or church spires, looks most desolate. On a similar plain in Germany or France, hundreds of different villages might be counted; here are only Petersburg at one end, and Cronstadt at the other, and in the centre lurks Peterhof. The inhabitants of these plains are enchanted that their eyes are unshackled by any object, whereas mountaineers stand in amazement, but cold and dissatisfied. It is again the bright nights, that by their indescribable light lend such a marvellous charm to this boundless prospect. If any one takes the trouble to pass five hours in the pleasant villa on this height, he will see the sun dip down at a late hour into the sea, and then rise over the city of Petersburg. The hours that intervene pass as if in a dream, which transports the wearied soul into an unknown land. He may listen to the subdued distant thunder of cannon, that from the ramparts of Cronstadt announces the close of day; he can hear the tattoo of drums, enlivening the pretty garden of the old palace; the stillness of night surrounds him on every side, but the light does not fade away, and at last all life seems dead, except the songs

of the distant nightingales in the English garden. Towards midnight, when the light grows rather dimmer, the view is even more wonderful. In the spot of the horizon where the sun sank to rest, a fiery red glow is visible, like a distant and terrible conflagration, to which the silvery-white mirror of the sea forms a striking contrast. The Northern daylight seems poor in comparison with the night pictures, that Peterhof displays more than any other place near the capital. The whole of Russia, with its boundless distant views, offers the most marked difference from England, where the eye seldom reaches any great distance, and the aspect of the country becomes wearisome by the monotony of its cultivation.

Descending from this height towards the English garden, we reach the willow plantation at the back of the wood; but we must first cross a desolate space; we traverse the modest little thicket by the side of the rivulet that ripples gaily through it. When Alexandra was driving, in the year 1836, with her husband, in this secluded spot, she expressed a wish that the place should also be adorned with a cottage,—indeed, with a Russian peasant's hut. Nicholas promised it for the ensuing year; but his greatest delight was to surprise his wife by the fulfilment of her wishes. Three weeks after, the Emperor, one Sunday morning, declared that after mass, he was obliged, with his children, to visit the Cadet Camp, and requested his consort to await his return in the old palace, or till he sent for her; accordingly, after mass, he and all the children disappeared. In the

course of an hour an aid-de-camp arrived, to show the Empress the way to the place where the Emperor was expecting her, beyond the Cadet Camp. She drove with one of her ladies in an open carriage and four, to the spot whither the aide-de-camp conducted her, and stopped at last on the same ground where, a few weeks previously, she had wished for a cottage. By the Czar's all-potent will a house now stood there, to her amazement, and from the door came forward a porter, generally in Russia a discharged soldier, in a long grey greatcoat, the collar embroidered in gold lace, and three gold chevrons on his left sleeve. Contrary to the Russian usage, he was no bald-headed old grey-beard, but a tall, fine-looking man, in the prime of life. He opened the door of the carriage, and begged her Majesty, with every token of respect, to enter his house for a few minutes. Not until he spoke did the illustrious lady recognise in this handsome veteran her own husband, who nevertheless played out his part with perfect gravity. Accompanied by him she went into the house, where she found her seven children awaiting her. "Permit me, your Majesty," continued the veteran, "to tell you the names of my children, and to recommend them to the powerful protection of the Czarina. My eldest son is already an aide-de-camp, though scarcely nineteen years of age, and I trust he may pursue a fortunate career. I have a petition, however, to make to your Majesty, in favour of my three other sons, and my three daughters. My ten-years-old boy, Constantine, is intended for the navy, my seven-years-old, Nicholas, for the Engineers,

and the youngest, Michael, for the Artillery. My eldest daughter, Marie, I should wish to place in Smolna, the second, Olga, in the Catherine Institution, and the third, Alexandrina, in the Patriotic Institution." The Empress promised the worthy Swiss to do all that lay in her power for these children, and, speechless with emotion, embraced her husband. She now noticed the arrangement of the interior, that contained everything usually to be found in a Russian peasant's hut, in the shape of wooden stools and benches, tables, and kitchen utensils. The hut was called Nikolskoe.

During the time of their stay in Peterhof, from the beginning of June to the middle of August, good fortune caused a succession of family fêtes to become due. June 25th was Nicholas's birthday, which was, however, very quietly celebrated. July 1st, Alexandra's birthday, was considered the most important domestic and popular fête of the year. July 22d, Lady Day, was also the King of Prussia's birthday; in former years it was the name-day of the venerable Empress-mother, and more recently, that of the wife of the heir-apparent (now reigning Empress), the Grand Duchess Maria Pawlowna of Saxe Weimar. June 26th was the birthday of the Grand Duchess, Alexandra Josephowna. July 27th, that of the Grand Duke Nicholas; and in the beginning of August was the fête of Alexandra's eldest daughter Marie. A summer seldom passed without some foreign guests or members of the reigning German families being received at Peterhof, and sharing in the splendours of the Court there. A special steamboat was employed, solely for the

purpose of fetching foreign guests from Stettin or Kiel, and taking them back again; and in order to do honour to his foreign visitors, the Emperor received them both in the old and new palace, and in the Gothic houses in the vicinity, besides erecting a number of splendid family dwellings for their benefit. But Peterhof was accessible to foreign artists also, who thus not only became acquainted with Imperial pomp and power, but also with their domestic life. Two of these were specially noticed by the Emperor, Horace Vernet and Gudin; they helped to decorate the cabinet of the Czar, and found many a picturesque point of view in the vicinity of Peterhof, that might perhaps have been overlooked by native eyes. They generally departed in autumn, with fresh laurels and substantial gold, leaving the hospitable land many a beautiful and artistic souvenir. There Horace Vernet painted the Imperial family at a tournament, a masterpiece in composition, but deficient in the likeness of the individuals. The façade of the palace itself is long, but simple, and only distinguished by the golden cupola of the church to the right, and to the left by a gold eagle; there is much splendour in the interior, but few objects of art. We must specify, however, the pictures of Hackert, that represent the naval battle of Tschesme. It is well known that Orlof caused a ship of war to be blown up at Leghorn, in order that the artist might depict the incident from his own observation; but these paintings are cold and uninteresting, and generally overlooked by visitors to the palace. During the thirty years of Nicholas's reign, no alteration has been made on the palace itself, although

all around everything is new; persons who had not visited this spot since the year 1827 till the death of Nicholas, believed that they saw an entirely new town.

While the shores of Petersburg, as far as Oranienbaum, are adorned with all the art and taste, the luxury and nature that the nineteenth century in Europe can supply, in the shape of palaces, country-seats, gardens, churches, cloisters, the whole presenting a refreshing spectacle to the eye, the opposite Finland shore lies arid and desolate, precisely as in the days of Peter. By merely crossing the river between the two coasts, the one side is indicative of a fruitful present, and the other of a desolate past. What in the beauteous Rheingau has been the work of many centuries, the reigns of Peter and Nicholas alone have here produced, as if by magic; barren nature has been embellished by the skill and industry of man, and enriched and beautified by human means. To Petersburg, that Imperial capital, adorned with palaces, columns, and golden cupolas, this shore forms a fitting western boundary, and as far as Peterhof and Oranienbaum, is in the same connection with the capital as the shores of the Bosporus do from Stamboul to Bojukdere. The palace and gardens of Zarskoe-Selò are solemn, quiet, and majestic; we divine that here the most powerful ruler on earth dwells in unapproachable seclusion, where all is measured; we even shrink from careless movements on the well-kept, orderly paths, and feel as if an Imperial foot alone ought to tread them; Horace's line would have formed an admirable inscription over the entrance: *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.* Peterhof, on

the contrary, is calculated to attract and to entertain the most motley crowd. Beside the fountains, we see the most refined aristocrats standing in astonishment, and in the shady paths a Finland peasant, lying down, cheerfully eating dry bread, seasoned with salt; in Zarskoe-Selò such a scene would be an anachronism. If we wished to define both places by a German word, we must call the one *Kaisersruhe* and the other *Kaiserslust.*

Here at least there were evening hours when the Imperial family could breathe fresh air undisturbed. When towards evening the ever-busy Nicholas had finished his affairs, and read all papers and petitions, his children, especially in earlier years, assembled round him, and for an occasional half-hour he used to share their games; then the whole family, with or without any retinue, got into an open *char-à-banc,* the Emperor on the front seat acting as coachman; they drove slowly along those avenues nearest the sea, still brightened by the rays of the declining sun, and suddenly appeared in the upper gardens, where two military bands were playing under fragrant limes, attracting a vast throng of people. The carriage stopped; their Majesties desired some persons in the crowd to approach, and conversed with them, but wished to avoid receiving any special marks of respect—indeed, they much preferred remaining unnoticed. On fine summer evenings this select Imperial circle drank tea at one of the twenty different resorts that the Emperor had erected for his wife, hurrying back to the secluded Alexandria before the damp night-air could injure the Empress, whose

health, since the year 1836, was so seriously affected that its complete restoration was no longer possible. This is not surprising, when we cast a backward glance at the last ten years of the Empire.

The life of both their Majesties, when we study it more closely, consists of obligations, engagements, and weighty duties, offering little enjoyment, with the exception of the few moments devoted to domestic life. The nervous system of the Empress since December 14th had been severely shaken, and a convulsive spasm in the face, as well as a tremulous motion of her head, often disturbed the beautiful repose of her expression. It cost her both much trouble and effort to master these attacks, and even with the greatest endurance of which the female sex is capable, she was not always able to overcome every token of this sudden pain. The reader is already aware of the physical fatigues she was subjected to during the first year of her accession; the two interments so quickly succeeding each other, the coronation in Moscow, the Turkish war, the death of the Empress-mother, the Polish revolution, the terrible year of the cholera—all this would have sufficed to affect the strongest nature. Notwithstanding the unconstraint and independence of her character, her Imperial dignity, church, and society compelled her to encounter a number of inevitable obligations, which kept her in a state of constant excitement. No day passed without the arrival of petitions that she had not the means of satisfying, some of which indeed were quite laughable, not to say shameless, but under every circumstance they exacted much time and strength; no

day passed without official presentations, without visits from ladies of high degree, utterly indifferent to Alexandra herself, though far from being so to her visitors. If any one was not invited to Court for a few weeks he immediately suspected disgrace or want of proper consideration, and wished to convince himself on what grounds he had been forgotten. The Empress often received persons of this kind—indeed, almost invariably,—in order that the public might be thus convinced of the delicacy of her health. None of the higher classes of society in Petersburg left the capital to travel without taking leave of her in person; no one came back without presenting themselves before her. In the course of the year, she received many thousands of persons, solely from established etiquette. The minutes she passed with real satisfaction might have been counted. In fifteen years she had been the mother of seven children, one being born in the dreadful cholera year of anguish and sorrow. From the year 1835 she could rarely appear in society, and her appearance at great Court ceremonies on festive occasions was prohibited. The Court and the city, since Nicholas's accession, were accustomed to see the Imperial couple together every day; so it made a bad impression when a Court reception was suddenly put off, and the public became impatient. For a good many years Nicholas dispensed with the popular festival on New Year's Day, out of consideration for his invalid wife, and various other Court entertainments were abolished. The Emperor anticipated that his consort would not be able to appear at Christmas, and not wishing to

expose her and himself to the gossip of the town, he asked the physicians, in the middle of December, whether the Empress could be churched at Christmas. The doctors answered in the negative, to his infinite annoyance. The oft-recurring illness of Alexandra was laid to the charge of her two body physicians by the public, and the opinion that they ought to be replaced by others suggested itself to her husband also. One of these had been body physician to the family ever since Nicholas's marriage; he was English by birth, learned, and highly cultivated, and possessed the entire confidence of both their Majesties. Physicians in families of distinction are too apt to give up their town practice, and thus lose theoretical knowledge and acute insight into maladies. For this reason Dr. Crichton had been given a colleague for many years, who enjoyed a great reputation in the capital, and universal confidence there. This was a German, Rauch by name, in those days considered an infallible oracle in the city, and excelling all his colleagues in erudition. But this man also was deficient in two qualifications, without which a physician cannot be entirely trustworthy—a quick eye and a quick ear; moreover, he became nervous the moment he breathed the atmosphere of a Court, which indeed he rather shunned than sought. The Emperor himself therefore resolved to consult a third physician about the state of his wife, for which purpose a young German, Dr. Mandt, was highly recommended. He had studied in Berlin under Rust, Horn, and Hufeland, had undertaken scientific journeys, and after having been a short

time in Petersburg had become the object of universal attention, although he had accompanied the Grand Duchess Helène to the capital only to spend one winter there, for he was a professor in the University of Greifswalde. About ten days before Christmas Mandt made his appearance in the Winter Palace, and investigated the condition of the Empress in the presence of the Emperor and the two physicians, when he declared plainly and decidedly that he would restore her to health in a few days, and that she might be present at the fêtes. Nicholas now committed the treatment of the Empress wholly to this young physician, and in fact, in the course of eight days, she could appear in public and at the fête, to the universal joy of all in the city. Their Majesties showed the most absolute reliance on the new doctor, and endeavoured to secure him for their Court. A violent storm arose in Petersburg against the lucky foreigner, especially on the part of the other doctors, who all felt themselves injured by this occurrence, particularly as in those years the national element was so highly favoured at Court. The appearance of the young man was far from uninteresting. A tall and slender figure, a massive brow, an eagle nose, piercing eyes, a well-shaped mouth, and a proud firm step, invested him with peculiar and almost priestly dignity; he either attracted with irresistible force or was felt to be harshly repellent. Many of his colleagues could perhaps vie with him in learning, but not one possessed such insight into the depths of the soul, into the most profound recesses of the whole being, and no one exercised such power over

the human, and more especially the female, heart. From that moment the town was divided into two parties—his warmest admirers and most implacable foes; and it seemed as if the Court, for the first time, had to contend against public opinion. From the time of this incident Mandt remained the winter in Petersburg, in the vicinity of the Grand Duchess Helène, resolved himself to dictate the conditions on which he would remain as body physician in the Imperial Court, provided the Emperor expressed a wish that he should do so.

At the same period a negotiation was commenced with another physician, Markus, as it would have been setting public opinion too grossly at defiance to have intrusted the Imperial family to the care of a foreigner. Markus was born and educated in Russia, had gone through the French campaign as a young doctor, and considered a medical oracle in Moscow. He possessed the love and esteem of all his colleagues, so that they also proposed him to the Court; for in Petersburg no one expressed any desire to share so difficult an office with Mandt, who even in the smallest circles could not conceal his dictatorial disposition. Alexandra, however, continued well all through the winter, and had strength enough to visit her schools and to enter into society occasionally, and often to go to the theatre, so that Mandt's quick perception and skill could not be denied. He seemed as if born and trained at Court, though when in Germany he had never been brought into contact with the most petty prince. His manners were versatile and easy, his demeanour assured and

steady, his speech frank and plain; he gave his opinion to Nicholas briefly and clearly. The obsequiousness with which a Russian physician presents himself before his superiors was quite foreign to his custom—in short, he was the man for the Emperor and the Empress.

In the course of the ensuing spring Markus appeared from Moscow, and made his first acquaintance with the Court and the perplexing circumstances in which he was placed. His appearance was totally different from that of Mandt in every respect—indeed, he had nothing in common with him except his position. His exterior was that of a benevolent clever man; his conversation betokened varied acquirements; he was as well versed in classical literature as in the more recent discoveries in physical science, and assuredly the most intellectual of all the physicians in Russia. Markus found many old acquaintances and patrons at the Imperial Court, and his agreeable demeanour would certainly speedily have gained him friends had he been as complete a stranger as Mandt, who by his arrogance had made enemies of the whole medical corps. The two men did not at all suit each other, and only respect for their high vocation and for the Emperor could induce them to act together. The treatment of the Empress was for the present confided to Dr. Markus. Mandt remained in Russia, with the title of consulting doctor to the Grand Duchess Helène; but he frequently saw the Empress and observed her organization. She was better this summer than any one had expected, and able to undertake a journey to Southern Russia. The Emperor held a grand review of troops at Wosnesensk, to which

many foreign princes were invited, among others the young Duke Maximilian of Leuchtenberg; after this it was settled to pay a visit to the southern shores of the Crimea.

We regret that space will not admit of our giving a detailed account of that wonderful country, but we refer our readers to our own work, *A Pilgrimage to the South-East*, the first part of which, "The Peninsula of the Taurus," contains minute descriptions of the regions and towns visited in that year by the Empress. A journey from Petersburg to the Crimea, from the home of the birch and the pine, to that of the olive and the fig, was in those days very troublesome, and, notwithstanding all the preparations made for her comfort, proved very fatiguing for her. The monotonous plains from Petersburg to the Black Sea are enlivened by streams that excite surprise by their width, so unusual with us. Rivers like the Oder, Elbe, and Weser, beside the Don and the Dneiper, would be considered only tributary streams. If we reach the same latitude in which the Alps rise in the centre of Europe, there also begin the steppes of Southern Russia, the first impression being that this is the end of the world. The more surprising, therefore, is the Crimea, and its picturesque mountain-chains, and the Black Sea, with its ancient Greek traditions. The Empress's delight in the enjoyment of such unequalled scenery made her forget her delicate health, the only drawback being that she could not entirely lay aside her Imperial prestige, and that difficult, nay fatiguing, duties, awaited her towards the stranger population of this boundless kingdom. Her

taste for the beauties of nature was as highly cultivated as for literature, painting, and music. After reading Jean Paul's *Titan*, she cherished an eager wish to see the Borromean Islands, and in every profound mind a desire springs up to see foreign scenes. This longing is the greater in the inhabitants of the North, from art causing the poverty of reality to be all the more oppressive. The reader knows that Alexandra was obliged to rest contented with a view of the Gulf of Finland from Peterhof, and with the small brooks and lakes of that country palace; she had already felt pleasure at sight of the little acclivities of Duderhof and Oranienbaum; the Rhine exhilarated her whole soul; but everything she had as yet seen, when compared to the Crimea, was like the pleasant landscapes of Ruysdael and Hobbima in comparison with the splendid paintings of Claude Lorraine.

From Wosnesensk the Emperor and Empress, and their eldest son and daughter, proceeded to Odessa, and thence by the steamer "North Star" to Sebastopol. From this steel-clad fortress, which in that year little dreamt of its future celebrity, their first expedition was to the George Cloister, about two miles from the city, situated on the rugged brow of steep banks 400 feet above the Pontus. After service in the Cloister, Alexandra examined the environs, where, according to tradition, the Temple of Iphigenia once stood. "What were my sensations," said she herself afterwards, "in standing on the very spot where stood, a thousand years ago, our poet's highest ideal of woman! Although enchanted in our youthful years by Greek legends, we

neither inquire as to their locality nor date, and still less does the possibility suggest itself of ourselves making a pilgrimage to the identical spot! It seemed to me as if a long-forgotten dream had been revived in my memory and become a reality."

But in addition to Grecian and Christian traditions, the Crimea is also rich in objects of present interest, which, to the cultivated European, border on the marvellous. On the ensuing day the Empress drove with her daughter Marie to Baktschiserai, the capital of Khan Tatary, which transports the spectator from the Greek world into the land of the "Thousand-and-one Nights." The uncouth Taurians of their day can scarcely have gazed with greater curiosity at Grecian Iphigenia than these equally uncouth Tatars at the two august ladies. What could those inoffensive aborigines offer as a reception worthy of an Empress? They galloped to meet her on their swift little horses, darting round her open carriage, performing feats of horsemanship like swallows on the wing. In order to see all this novel world better, the ladies stood up in the carriage to have an uninterrupted view all around. The insignificant houses in the town, which lies deep in the valley, hemmed in by a narrow ravine, were freshly painted with fantastic figures, intended to express the joy that Asiatic speech could not interpret to a European. In the evening the city looked still more festive, being adorned with thousands of lamps and lights, and the flaming minarets and illuminated old trees in the garden were certainly a new and surprising spectacle to the illustrious guests. Next morning the Emperor and the heir-apparent

arrived, when the youthful Marie received them in princely Tatar costume. As Padischah of this nation, the Emperor could not decline attending with his family a religious service of the howling dervises, and also a Tatar wedding in the palace; but these exhausted all the resources of this poor little town for their entertainment. On the following day the Empress visited Tschufut Kaleh (a town of the Karaite Jews) situated on a mountain-peak above the narrow gorge of the Tatar capital. The path to this rocky town is only accessible on foot, and the Karaites brought, for their august guests, two milk-white horses, the saddles decorated with red and green velvet, and gold, silver, and pearls. These horses remained at the disposal of the ladies during their whole journey on the Southern shores. In the midst of the valley between the Karaite town and that of the Tatars, is a Greek chapel in the cavity of a rock, the only access to it being a fragile wooden fabric. To the astonishment of their strange escort, the ladies also visited this cloister, called "The Ascension." After reaching the summit they first rode to the valley of Jehosaphat, the burial-ground of the Karaites. Here the Empress first rested under the shade of the oaks, that number almost as many years as the history of Europe, and then entered the town of the Karaites, which, according to the assertions of the people, existed in this corner of the peninsula long before the birth of Christ. The whole community, the higher orders of the priesthood at their head, in old Oriental Church costume, received her with songs and prayers for the preservation of the Imperial family. In this small

but cleanly temple Alexandra saw the parchments of the Old Testament, and conferred the honour on a private family of partaking of a breakfast prepared for her there in the old Asiatic style. When the two ladies again descended into the gorge of the valley, the Emperor and the heir-apparent received them at the entrance of the Palace of Baktschiserai. Next morning they followed the mountain-paths to Simferopol, and were amused by a camel race, certainly a novel sight to a European, but not a picturesque one. This capital of the Taurid Peninsula offered almost nothing to the illustrious travellers but necessary rest. The house where they lodged was adorned by the Tatars, within and without, by garlands of the finest Crimean grasses, according to the old Greek custom. Next day they drove slowly past the Tschadir-Dagh down to the sea, and left to the gentlemen of their suite the pleasure of climbing this mountain. The ensuing few days were among the most enjoyable of their whole lives. The novel style of the landscapes on the southern shore, the strong impression they made on such cultivated and profound spirits, the delight and cordiality with which the Empress was received in their different palaces by Potemkin, Narischkin, and Potocki, deserve a more minute description, but our space will not admit of it. From Aluschka, along the shore to Alupka, they took three days to reach the celebrated palace of Prince Woronzow; but these supplied them with the fairest reminiscences during their future life. The first three days Alexandra passed secluded from society in this paradise, not owing to physical fatigue and exhaustion

alone, but from the too great excitement of her soul, which absolutely required rest and repose. Amid this beautiful scenery she was peculiarly susceptible to religious feelings. In such moments she liked to be alone in quiet prayer. It was not her senses that were occupied and amused, but rather her mind, which was overflowing with warm feeling. She felt the nothingness of all earthly splendour before the majesty of Nature, and the greatness of the human intellect capable of comprehending and appreciating such grandeur. She also felt that a life devoid of splendour and form, but spent with Nature, must excel the artificial pomp of a Court, and how little a man of noble disposition requires in order to rise beyond the commonplace. But the great of the earth are connected by a thousand threads, bands, nay, chains, to the most burdensome duties, and such links cannot be rent asunder. Happy they who are set free from them, even occasionally, for a short space.

The Emperor travelled from Alupka to the Caucasus, and thus his consort could remain in the tranquillity of Prince Woronzow's palace. Alupka and Orianda, the subsequent palace of Alexandra on the same southern shore, are undoubtedly the most picturesque portions of that region, and even vie with the island of Chios, so highly celebrated by the ancients. Prince Woronzow embellished these marvels of nature by the charm of social life. During the day he conducted his illustrious guests on horseback in every direction in the neighbourhood, and in the evening agreeably surprised them by music, illuminations, and even by an improvised French

theatre. The populace of these Tatar villages surrounded the palace day and night, in the hopes of seeing the Empress of that realm, of which they formed the smallest portion. They assisted in transforming the largest hall in the palace into a stage, bringing stones, blocks of rock, trees, and flowers. The actors, the Russian inhabitants and land-proprietors on the southern shores, spent their evenings with the Imperial guests in the palace, and drove out with them in the forenoons. The day before the departure of Alexandra all the Tatar women, with their children, were placed in picturesque groups in the vineyard, and she spoke to many of them through an interpreter; when the festivities closed by the usual oily Tatar dinner for them all. They prayed loudly for the welfare of the Imperial family, and earnestly uttered a wish that "they might soon see again the beautiful bright eyes of the Empress." In the cabinet of Alexandra, after her departure, a paper was found on the table with the following words, written by her own hand:—"With ineffaceable impressions and memories I bid thee farewell, fair Alupka! Shall I ever see thee again? This question suggests itself irresistibly to me, and makes my leave-taking sorrowful. What a vast distance between the Black Sea and the Baltic!"

From here she went to Orianda, where Nicholas caused a fine palace to be built for her; but even the wishes of the mightiest on earth are often powerless. In twelve years the structure was finished, but never more was Alexandra to see the Crimea! Her stay in that magic land was brightened and embellished by the

constant presence of her daughter Marie, at that time eighteen years of age. The disposition of this, her eldest daughter, was more lively than that of her mother; youth, and her remarkable beauty under such auspicious circumstances, made her really an incomparable being, and heightened the happiness of her mother. Earnest feeling, and a taste for art and nature, were strongly developed in the daughter as well as in the mother, without, however, impairing her youthful cheerfulness and ingenuousness. The faithful companion of the Empress, Countess Catherine Tiesenhausen, increased their enjoyment by her sympathy. The climate of the southern coast of the Crimea resembles in some degree that of Nice, without the scorching south winds, and is equally sheltered from the north. It seemed made for the health of the Empress. Subsequently, however, this country, instead of a peaceful resort for the august lady, became the seat of a devastating war. By the middle of October the Imperial family returned to Moscow, in order to pass their time there together till December 6th.

Moscow in the year 1837 was no longer the same city as at the time of the Empress's coronation. With aristocratic pride Moscow had arisen from her ashes, like a Phœnix, without the help of any fire insurance, and was now adorned with numerous palaces, which, indeed, were very brilliant, but their inmates were no longer mere princely Boyars, as they had been twenty years before, but very often men who, after laying aside their uniforms, either devoted themselves to some branch of commerce, or gave up their palaces to others for that purpose. That swarthy soul of the present

day, Steam, ascended in lofty columns from many places, and the large market-place was filled with a variety of inland productions. A novel life prevailed in the whole city, Court ambition had yielded to mercantile industry, and as all development in Russia takes place suddenly and violently, much here was in full bloom at the end of fifteen years that in Germany could not have flourished under a century. The Emperor and Empress thought it right to make their children acquainted with these new impulses of the town, and therefore visited the different manufactories constructed by human energy. The citizens of Moscow were highly gratified by such attentions; they received their eminent guests with respectful deference, and took leave of them with presents and specimens of their productions. Two very remarkable men stood at that time at the head of the society—the Governor-General of Moscow, Prince Dmetri W. Golizyn, and Prince Sergei N. Golizyn. Both dated from the time of Catherine, and were distinguished by the refinement of their manners. The former, since the revolt of Poland in 1794, had taken part in all the Russian wars down to the expedition to Paris, and his chivalrous figure, adorned with every Russian order, denoted a man of the utmost independence, but who won the confidence of every one who approached him. The city of Moscow had looked up to him as to a father for three-and-twenty years, and this city alone of all the great capitals of Europe could boast, that by the precautions of Prince Golizyn, when cholera appeared, it passed away without giving rise to the popular scenes of horror that

had disgraced so many other towns. The house of this Prince was as easy of access to those who sought relief, as his *salon* to meritorious servants of the State, authors, and artists. The rapid development of commerce in Moscow was chiefly his work, his principal adviser in these matters being the academician Joseph Hamel, who travelled for some years in England at the Prince's expense, and brought home with him any new discoveries suitable to Russia. The other, Prince S. N. Golizyn, was a grandee in the most consummate sense of the word; rich, amiable, amusing, benevolent, intellectual, and entirely devoid of pride and egotism. These two enlivened the evenings of the Emperor and Empress, and vied with each other in arranging amusements, rare in Moscow—for after a lengthened abode there no one can help feeling how far removed it is from the centre of Europe: the theatres are inferior to those of Petersburg, other public amusements are wholly wanting, and, more especially in winter and autumn, the town after seven o'clock seems dead. And yet the society was large enough, and intellectual enough, not only to improvise quickly Italian operas given by amateurs of the highest class, but to perform them in so masterly a manner that neither London with all its noblemen, nor Paris with its "Quartier Germain," could equal them. In truth the highest circles in Russia, especially of both capitals, are provided with many musical dilettanti, and they willingly contribute their mite towards the enlivenment and improvement of society, and public objects also.

Neither princely dignity nor the highest rank deter

any one from taking part both in public and private concerts; the enthusiasm of the Russians for music is unaffected and sincere, in other countries very often only assumed. But the minor gentry and citizens in Moscow, who neither appear at Court nor could receive Imperial guests, opened their *salons* to the Imperial suite, and made a favourable impression on them by their Lucullus banquets. The lower orders thronged round the small house inhabited by the Imperial family in the Kremlin, and did honour to the festivities by their thousandfold loud hurrahs. The Emperor and Empress showed themselves often publicly in the town; they not only visited all the institutions, of which the Foundling Hospital is by far the most remarkable, but also the public squares and the environs. At that period the Kremlin was still unchanged, and just as the French had left it in 1812. The Czar and Czarina and their seven children inhabited the Tschudow Palace, once the abode of the Patriarchs and Metropolitans. No one from the exterior of this house could possibly divine that the most mighty of the rulers of this world lived there; the interior also is devoid of ornament, and so confined in space that Alexandra's three daughters, like those of citizens, slept in one room. Another palace called "Alexander" still stood opposite the Terema, distinguished neither by pomp nor style, but well worthy of notice from Napoleon having inhabited five adjoining rooms in it. From here he looked out on the conflagration.

While Napoleon himself was contented with five rooms, the Imperial kitchen at that time was estab-

lished in the very holiest church in all Russia, in the church of the Ascension and Coronation. The sacred floor was desecrated by being turned into shambles, the pictures of the saints used as boards for kitchen purposes, and instead of church incense arose the odours of cooking. No wonder that the Imperial family seldom or never entered this palace, the abode of Napoleon; but this historical suite of rooms was allowed to be shown to the inquisitive. During the presence of the Court this palace served as a dwelling for the higher authorities, and Napoleon's room was on this occasion prepared for Count Nesselrode.

The Court remained in Moscow till December 6, and celebrated Nicholas's name-day there. At last, after the close of this festival, the whole Court now set off, in nearly a hundred carriages, in a degree of cold that recalled Napoleon's time; the Czar last of all drove off in a sledge with three horses, and reached Petersburg first in thirty-six hours. The health of the Empress was as good as could even be wished, and a happy and gay winter was looked forward to by every one. No one anticipated that in the course of a few days the Winter Palace was to be burned down, and thus the fêtes and all the winter gaieties disturbed. Nicholas, while in Moscow, designed, with the aid of several architects, the plan of a magnificent new palace, to replace what was formerly called the Alexandra Palace, and already they had begun to pull down the old building when the Winter Palace in Petersburg also became a prey to the flames, placing the Imperial family in some embarrassment. The Winter

Palace had not been built a hundred years, for it was begun in the last years of the Empress Elisabeth, and completed at the commencement of Catherine's reign; it was the largest building in Europe, and the most richly stored within. The wing inhabited by the Imperial family was the most simply furnished of all; a long dark corridor divided those apartments opposite the Admiralty from those that overlooked the large court of the palace; this corridor was obliged to be lighted even in broad daylight, and was not only obscure but most disagreeable, from the smell of lamp-oil; the uninhabited rooms were the brightest. The fire was caused by the explosion of a pipe, and first laid hold of a beam, from which it spread to the Field-Marshal's hall. Some days previously a curious smell of fire pervaded the palace; no one liked to mention it to their superiors, or even to give a casual hint on the subject; so few had then the courage to express their opinions. The fire burst forth on December 17th, at nine o'clock in the evening, in the above-named hall, and also in a wing at a considerable distance from the Imperial apartments. A conflagration in this mighty building, inhabited and watched by thousands, seemed as improbable as a fire on the Neva. When in the palace itself the first intelligence of the fact was carried to the Imperial wing, such an incredible event was treated with derision. For the first time since their return to the capital, their Majesties were in the theatre; an adjutant brought the news to the Emperor alone, for all had the strictest orders never to give any information in the Empress's presence that could alarm her.

Nicholas, with infinite self-command, requested his wife to remain to the end of the play, and then to go straight to the Anitschkow Palace; after which he hurried off to the Winter Palace, where he found some preparations already made for extinguishing the fire, but a still greater amount of anxious trepidation. The Neva was frozen four inches thick, and offered only a very scanty supply of water, that, with 20 degrees of cold, froze at once in the hose of the fire-engines. The Emperor's first care was to convey all his children in safety to the Anitschkow Palace; the youngest was so fast asleep that the English nurses carried him into the carriage, wrapped in blankets, and reached the distant palace before the crowd blocked up every street. The presence of the Czar produced order in the assistance that could be offered; for to put out the fire was simply impossible. In a short time it seized the roof of the wing beside the Neva, which about ten o'clock fell in with a tremendous crash into the great White Hall, which fortunately contained nothing but a vast number of valuable chandeliers. Owing to the fire having taken this direction, the Hermitage was spared,—indeed, entirely separated from it,—with its precious art treasures, crown jewels, fine library, and the Imperial archives.

The sad news, however, had flown through the town for an hour past, and many court and palace officials hurried thither in time to save the objects under their charge. A suite of rooms forming the Court Crown offices was first exposed to the fire, and yet both the money and books were saved. Both the adjacent

Crown buildings, the War Office and the Admiralty, were selected by the Emperor himself to receive all the valuables that could be rescued; the Minister of War, Prince Tschernitschef, formed a line by two battalions of soldiers in the midst of the sympathizing spectators, and to a third battalion was allotted the duty to convey away the objects under the superintendence of their officers. All this took place in feverish haste; for the fire, mocking every effort, raged destructively in the half empty-rooms, and in the course of half an hour demolished the whole length of the Neva wing. It reached at the same moment the Emperor's cabinet, and that of the Empress a storey beneath, bursting open the entrance-doors just as the masterwork of Domenichino, "St. John," and Murillo's loveliest "Madonna" were taken down from the walls: for what is most valuable is often overlooked; all the tables and footstools worked by the Empress had been long saved, but these masterpieces forgotten. The wing inhabited by the family now caught fire, but its contents also were almost entirely rescued. One of the next rooms was the library and the modelling-room of the Emperor and the heir-apparent; as no key could be found the doors were broken open by grenadiers, and the locked presses carried out. The flames now towered to such a height that they lit up half the city, and bore the tidings of the misfortune to the most distant dwellings. In spite of the bitter cold, the heat in the square actually scorched the spectators, the moment a current of air conveyed the flames towards the crowds, who in masses closely packed together in all the squares,

exposed at once to the most cutting cold and to the most fiery heat, were not so much astonished as horrified, and only from time to time were heard sobbing and lamenting. It seemed less a disaster in the eyes of the populace than an unheard-of crime, that could only have been produced by human malice and rebellion to God's will and protection. Sacrilege, blasphemy, and a transgression against the Imperial family, at that time, were regarded by the people as equal crimes, and this their kindly hearts saw in the conflagration of the palace. The perplexity, the distress, the anguish, the screams within, became every instant louder and more terrible, as the space for the inhabitants, those who came to the rescue and those who implored help, became less and less. When the fire was only blazing in the vicinity of the Court-offices thousands were still safe in the Neva wing; but when this caught fire also, and the ceiling of the White Hall fell in, all fled to the Admiralty wing, which the Imperial family inhabited. Already here the confusion and crush were tremendous; the soldiers who had come to the rescue rushed recklessly along over everybody and everything that formed an obstacle to their zeal; as in such a disaster all deference is at an end, maids of honour and ladies' maids, housemaids and State ladies, were all to be seen striving to push their way through the lines of the weather-beaten grenadiers of the palace, carrying some favourite object that they wished to save. When at length the front wing began to burn, from the square could be seen a number of heads like shadows on a wall hurrying along to the last egress. Already burning torches and beams

came flying among the crowd in the nearest streets and palaces, a noise like thunder following at short intervals the crash of falling buildings.

By midnight the whole of the front wing was in flames, and beyond all help. It was frightful to see the human beings left in the palace all eagerly crowding out of the last door. In the front centre of this wing was a clock, visible to the whole town, surmounted by the Imperial crown. A death-like silence reigned in the square, thronged with people, when it struck twelve; but scarcely had the last stroke resounded, when the whole building, including the clock and the crown, fell in, stunning all the spectators by the crash. At this moment of destruction all fell on their knees and made the sign of the cross, and in a few seconds universal groans and sobs were heard from hundreds of thousands. The Emperor was one of the last to leave the palace; to his presence and self-possession in giving directions was owing the rescue of all valuable objects. At the very first glance he perceived the impossibility of subduing the fire, and in all humility declared his readiness to submit to the inevitable. Just as he had done on December 14th, twelve years ago, he stood undaunted in the midst of the raging conflagration; and all, from his minister to the veteran grenadier, saw his glance calm and clear. Amid the severity of this misfortune, notwithstanding his anxious brow, a smile came to his lips when his dog, that had been missing for a long time, came up to him, wagging its tail, as if seeking its master as the sole refuge in danger, and trusting itself to him. The faithful ani-

mal did not again leave its master's side, not even in the crowd swarming in the interminable length of the square, lit up by the fire with the brightness of day.

In spite of the precautions of her husband, the burning of the palace was a new terror which affected the Empress's failing health. Scarcely had the intelligence reached Nicholas in the theatre than the public, curious to know the cause of his sudden disappearance, made inquiries, and shortly after left the theatre, so that Alexandra in her box was seized by a presentiment of evil. When, by the Emperor's desire, she was proceeding to the Anitschkow Palace, it was no longer a mystery to her what had called away her husband so suddenly. She drove towards the Winter Palace, and already saw from afar the bright flames soaring upwards and flickering over the roof; but the front wing was as yet untouched. With that singular calmness exhibited in every moment of trial through life, she arrived at the entrance, where the carriage was waiting to convey away her two younger children, both fast asleep. She entered the palace, kissed and blessed the unconcerned children, and proceeded to her cabinet, when it suddenly occurred to her that one of her Court ladies, Mdlle. Kutusow, was very ill in bed. She turned and first went to the invalid, giving orders that she should be removed, with the same care as her own children, to the Anitschkow Palace; and not till then did she make her way through the noisy tumult to her cabinet, selecting her most valuable correspondence and other papers, herself packing up all that was of importance, and commanding her retinue

and servants to save what was most precious. She bade farewell to the cabinet that had harboured her as Empress during twelve years, in the certainty never to see it again, and then repaired to the empty nursery of her children. Its windows overlooked the large inner Palace Court, and the burning rooms opposite offered a terrific but grand spectacle. One of her ladies came in and said, "What a misfortune has befallen your Majesty!" "What good fortune," rejoined the Empress, "that my children are saved, and that probably no life will be lost! Let us first thank God for this happiness in the midst of disaster, and let us bow to His will." When the Emperor himself brought the tidings of the safety of the invalid Mdlle. Kutusow, Alexandra entered her carriage and drove first to Count Nesselrode's, where she watched the progress of the fire from his windows, and at last proceeded in a state of great exhaustion to the Anitschkow Palace. Here she remained awake, in feverish excitement, till at length the wearied Emperor arrived. All that care and solicitude had effected for the benefit of her health within the past year vanished in an instant. And yet the dilemma of the other inhabitants of the Winter Palace was still more trying than that of the Imperial family, who found everything arranged for them in the Anitschkow Palace.

Several thousand persons, the inferior officials, servants, and even those of higher degree, were for the next few days without a roof to shelter their heads. A place of refuge near Anitschkow was provided for many, while others durst not even let it be known that

they had hitherto found a home in the Winter Palace. Next morning, a grey December sky, with its cold northern light, looked down on the walls of the stately palace, blackened by fire, and gazed at by hundreds and thousands of weeping eyes. Some solitary tongues of flame still shot up like Will-of-the-wisps from among the rubbish, and then vanished. Thousands were to be seen busied in seeking valuables among the ruins, while others were carrying lost goods out of the street: for Imperial property, in the eyes of an orthodox Russian, is as sacred as that of the Church, and the sympathy of this people in misfortune amounts to self-sacrifice. The most munificent offers were quickly made to the Emperor by his loyal people. One merchant besought the favour of being allowed to rebuild the Winter Palace at his own cost; another offered to bear half the expense; and a number promised to furnish materials for the purpose. The Emperor refused them all, and, a few days after the conflagration, summoned a committee, to whom was intrusted the speedy restoration of the palace, and a calculation of the expense.

The Christmas festivities and New Year's Day, as well as the whole of the ensuing winter, passed very quietly, both in the Court and in the city. In the course of a few weeks all was again brought together that had been given up as lost in the fire. The Russian people displayed an honesty and conscientiousness in restoring the objects they found that was quite touching. The cabinet of the Empress in the Anitschkow Palace was arranged and decorated exactly

as it had been in the Winter Palace. The entire library of both the Emperor and his children was collected together in a few weeks, with the exception of some stray volumes; and these too were eventually brought back by antiquarian merchants, to whom they had been in ignorance offered for sale. The whole family were together in Anitschkow, as they had been fifty years previously. The palace had remained in every respect the same, but the family was now very different. The haggard, pale Nicholas of twenty years ago had become the strongest and handsomest man in Europe; the once so insignificant Brigadier was now the mightiest ruler in the world; and although the care of the greatest empire on earth rested on his shoulders, and although malignant fate had played him many a trick, still at this moment, in the midst of misfortune, he was calm, and, indeed, in the bosom of his family, cheerful. The memories of this palace awoke within him a certain degree of youthful feeling, combining the best qualities of the father, the husband, and the chivalrous gentleman, with those of the Autocrat. But his charming wife, too, was no longer the same. Her demeanour, her movements, her dignity, were indeed more majestic than twenty years ago; but the year of terror had blanched her face, and the burden of high rank robbed her of her youthful attractions. Deep suffering lurked in her features, only occasionally betrayed by the sadness of her countenance. This last disaster had a most prejudicial effect on her. She seldom left the palace, the cradle of her married happiness. Her expeditions were solely to the institutions

for female education; but her strength was already so exhausted that she was obliged to devote more time to repose than to the endeavour to rally her energies. At home she had her children constantly with her, inspiring them with the same amiable tone in society that all her own words and actions displayed.

The city gradually acquired the conviction that her sufferings were real, and demanded a certain degree of indulgence from the public. The physicians prohibited her appearing at innumerable visits, often devoid of every object save that of etiquette. The more the public were deprived of seeing her, by her weak and invalid condition, the closer did her children assemble round her, and the more attention and interest did she show in their instruction. The heir-apparent, now twenty years of age, shared the duties of his father; after his years of study commenced his years of travel through the vast realm that he was one day to rule, and through Europe also. He was a handsome youth, his figure tall and stately, his features displaying rather the gentle expression of his mother than the resolute look of his father. Little was known of him in public, and, indeed, at that period, no one permitted themselves to pronounce any public opinion with regard to any member of the Imperial family. The heir-apparent, at the close of his education, however, was endowed with noble ideas, as well as with the knowledge that our epoch demands. During his travels in the interior of Russia, and in foreign countries, he was accompanied by men who enlightened his mind and imparted warmth to his heart. Within the next few years he

visited distant Siberia and the inhospitable steppes, witnessed the fruitfulness of German States and the treasures of Italy, the majesty of nature in the Alps, and the commercial industry of England. He eagerly wrote the impressions of these new scenes, not only to his parents and brothers and sisters, but also to several of his former teachers. The Emperor's second son also, Constantine, was growing up to the satisfaction of his parents. During this winter, in presence of the Court and many invited guests, he underwent his examination for twelve evenings in succession, and surprised every one by the ease with which he expressed himself in four modern languages.

The Empress revived, so far as time and circumstances permitted, the quiet domestic life of twenty years ago. In this seclusion she found some opportunities for solid reading, and followed with peculiar interest the historical studies of her children. She considered it her duty to become familiar with the researches of Niebuhr, having been acquainted with him when tutor to her brother, the Crown Prince. But as his work on Rome is not accessible to any lady, she made those who understood it interpret the spirit of that author, without however placing entire faith in all his conclusions. With all her weakness, she felt happier in this retired life than when in the possession of her full strength, in the whirlpool of the world, for her nature was far more serious than it appeared, and she herself more energetic than people gave her credit for; she conversed most with those whose intellect interested her mind, and with whom her heart sympathized. Her equanimity in misfortune,

combined with the highest female dignity, and also her goodness of heart, were universally acknowledged; but the versatility of her talent was hidden from the greater number, for she only displayed the treasures of her intellect to those by whom she was certain to be understood. Royal personages, however, must all share this fate; they are compelled to see so many people, and, coming in contact with them merely in passing, can only show the surface of their being; those who are called to Court on business usually avoid every other subject, but the immediate Court circle are guided by other motives. Those who read much feel the impulse to speak to others, and to listen to them on these subjects. There was only one among all the ladies of the Court who thoroughly understood the Empress—Countess Catharine Tiesenhausen; she had gained a knowledge of the world in her travels, and her conversation became an absolute necessity to the Empress. She possessed the most finished elegance of a Court lady, and resembled Alexandra in that apparent calmness of character which, veiled by a certain degree of reserve, often conceals the utmost susceptibility. Countess Catharine came early every morning as a much-loved friend to visit the illustrious invalid; for she alone had sufficient tact to charm away *ennui* by little notes, visits, and other attentions. Mme. Pauline Barthenief enlivened many evening hours by her enchanting singing and her unselfish attentions. Princesses are not always so fortunate as to find in their suites true self-sacrificing devotion such as Countess Tiesenhausen displayed; indeed, all are not endowed

with the instinct to select the right friends, or to cultivate and retain them. Alexandra had quick, acute perceptions, and the tact to attach to herself those whom she had chosen, and by her wondrous kindness to win their attachment. The dismissal we already named, of one High Chamberlain many years ago, is, we believe, the only instance of change during her whole life, except where death intervened. Another lady who cheered the evenings of the Empress was Baroness Krüdener, younger and in better health than the august lady, and with all her extreme vivacity possessing the same tranquillity as Catharine Tiesenhausen; inexhaustible in agreeable conversation, and the soul of pleasant social intercourse. The oldest of all her friends too, Cecilia, remained from the force of old habit in the vicinity of the Empress, and in every hour of suffering was absolutely indispensable to her.

But Imperial power, allied to friendship, *dévouement*, and zeal, could not suffice to impart strength to the sufferer, and the physicians recommended German air for the summer, and German baths. The time when the Neva breaks up in April is dangerous for a chronic sufferer; they would fain have spared the Empress this, but the sea at that time is not as yet navigable, the roads of the country were in a dreadful condition, so that, even with every despotic appliance, the invalid could not avoid those two weeks. She suffered pitiably during April, and could not begin her journey to Germany for change of air till the very end of that month.

The Emperor and Empress, and their third daughter, and their two young sons, Nicholas and Michael, arrived

together in Berlin on May 19th. Their reception was never more brilliant than on this occasion, for the Royal Family, accompanied by some distinguished guests, then at Berlin, went as far as Dessau to meet the Empress, and the Mecklenburgs to Friedrichsfelde. The Berliners were so familiarly acquainted with these princely Northern guests, that they always spoke of the Emperor as "our son-in-law," and of the Empress as "our Princess Charlotte." And in truth the Emperor of all the Russias was so popular in Berlin, and so universally beloved, that on this occasion a mark of distinction was to be conferred on him, such as in old fabulous times had been bestowed on Hercules, and in later days on Alexander the Great of Macedon in Corinth. He was made a burgess of the city on June 1st. When his brother Michael was told of the circumstance, he exclaimed, "If my brother ever abdicates his Imperial throne, no one can prevent his becoming a chimney-sweep in Berlin." As a burgher of the city, however, Nicholas built the beautiful hotel "unter den Linden" for the Russian embassy, which was also intended to receive the Imperial family when they visited Berlin on their journeys. The Emperor also made the town a present of a considerable sum of money, afterwards devoted to the erection of the Nicholas Burgher Hospital. Art and learning vied with each other in doing honour to the Empress, without consulting the physical powers of the invalid lady. The "Welt Gericht" of Schneider was given in honour of her, and people were surprised that she was obliged to spare her strength, which scarcely sufficed to endure to

the end this sacred work of art. She denied herself the theatre, the ballet, and the opera, which would certainly have tended more to enliven her. Quiet pleasant domestic life without Court etiquette, a happy reunion with her father and her brothers and sisters, in kindly Sans Souci, was the best tonic for the gentle sufferer. Expeditions thence to Glienicke, to Babelsberg, to her brother's, to her uncle William's, and his intellectual wife, were the best preparatives for the course of baths she was to take in Silesia, and afterwards in Bavaria. Her enjoyable domestic life with the King and her brothers, lasted for about a month in Silesia, partly in Erdmannsdorf and Fischbach, and the health of the Empress visibly improved; it was not only the air and the baths, but also the society that restored to her youth and strength.

The journey to Munich and the Bavarian highlands formed an epoch in the life of Alexandra. She saw Anspach and Baireuth, celebrated in the history of her family for its ancestral connection with her House, and also by the Margravine of Baireuth, and notorious by the legend of the White Lady. A tradition so closely interwoven with the family annals as that of the White Lady could not be indifferent to the Empress; she traced the origin and diffusion of this tradition with the most lively interest, but seemed rather to avoid all conversation on the subject, or even any allusion to it, although she placed no faith in the apparition. Indeed, she passed the night in the very palace where popular superstition declares that the White Lady nightly wanders about. This legend not only belongs to the Prussian reigning family,

but has taken root in many others. Baireuth interested the Empress most, from being the abode of Jean Paul, to whom we have frequently alluded as one of her favourite authors. She inquired with the greatest sympathy about all the circumstances of the great humourist, and as she drove past saw the house in which he lived. The further journey thence by Erlangen and Nürnberg to Munich, was a source of great enjoyment to her. She inscribed Nürnberg in her diary as "the heart of Germany," but she knew that it was also the cradle of the Hohenzollerns. Her enthusiasm was fully shared by her daughter Alexandra, about thirteen years old at that time, and the mother was reminded by the presence of this truly charming child, of the time when she used to travel with her own father. Delight in the mediæval ages and its splendours was quite as great on the part of the daughter as of the mother, and both passed a memorable day in Nürnberg. The Munich of the present day presents a striking contrast to this, the finest relic of the middle ages in all Germany. The artistic tendencies of King Louis of Bavaria were not at that time so universally acknowledged and appreciated as they now are, but Alexandra perfectly comprehended that a petty State could win for itself the highest importance, through the peaceful arts, and indeed a great Empire, that must always be prepared for war, might well envy such a State its tranquil happiness. The Empress was received in the hotel of the Russian Embassy by M. v. Severin, who proved a most amiable host. Here also she was compelled to sacrifice her zeal for Munich, and its art treasures, to the advice of her

physicians, to limit herself to very few expeditions, and to defer satisfying her curiosity till her return from the baths. She passed one day on the lovely Tegernsee before arriving at Kreuth; the route through the Bavarian highlands was, however, the most remarkable in her whole journey, as here for the first time the chain of the Alps became visible at a certain distance, and the impression made on mother and daughter was equally profound.

The life of royal personages is more monotonous and burdensome than that of all other men; they belong so little to themselves, consideration for others and various duties claiming the greatest share of their time and strength. The Empress, during the short journey from Munich to Kreuth, became stronger in these new scenes of nature, and in this brief period of independence. Imperial majesty and pomp vanish before the grandeurs and riches of nature, and in the enjoyment of the pure charms of fine scenery, man must feel greater and more free than when encompassed by the splendours of a throne. The wish to see the Alps had been cherished by Alexandra from her youth upwards, and now she enjoyed the fulfilment of this dream with that religious emotion which we know she possessed. The little village of Kreuth, where she was to undergo a milk cure, had on this occasion the honour, which so far as we know no European capital has ever yet enjoyed, of receiving three Empresses at the same time. The widow of the Emperor Francis the First, daughter of King Maximilian of Bavaria, only six years older than Alexandra, had arrived there, and also the widowed

Empress of the Brazils, daughter of Duke Eugene of Leuchtenberg, both members of the Bavarian royal family. The widowed Empress Charlotte was the same who made Francis the First so thoroughly happy at his advanced age, that he declared her to have been his only true wife, and his three first wives only formal Empresses. All these ladies thoroughly understood that every vestige of formal Court ceremony was to be banished, and that a loyal adherence to nature was their sole mission. But the mother of the Empress of the Brazils, the widowed Duchess of Leuchtenberg, also belonged to this charming and rare circle, and embellished the visit by her presence. The first Napoleon was constrained to admit that this Princess was the most beautiful and virtuous in Europe, and to her belongs the merit, like the Empresses of Russia and of Austria, of practising virtue and domestic affection on the throne, combining the strictest morality and purity of heart with the utmost charm and dignity.

The three last-named ladies inhabited Tegernsee, belonging to Queen Caroline, the second wife of King Maximilian, and sister of the Empress Elisabeth of Russia. Kreuth, consisting almost solely of a bath-house and the little royal palace, could not have lodged so many personages of degree and their numerous suites, but the party met alternately at Tegernsee and Kreuth. The Empress, during the milk cure, was ordered to walk in the woods and mountains, and she hoped in this way to regain her youthful vigour, besides enjoying the charms of nature that she

always so longed for. Every time that she read Voss's *Louise*, she accompanied in thought the happy people who live in rural districts, seeking strawberries or fuel to prepare their primitive meal, and she sometimes breathed a sigh, because the most simple and natural pleasures are forbidden the throne—indeed, she felt even the difference between an Empress and a Grand Duchess. Now when she laid aside, with the purple and the crown, all Imperial trammels, her strength failed, and, in order to breathe the fresh mountain air she was obliged to be carried in a chair; but she had the happiness of seeing her lovely young daughter springing round her like a gazelle. Although only thirteen years old, she had a great love of scenery, and a decided turn for botany, and was quite happy in the wealth of new wild-flowers unknown to the north. The two gardens of Zarskoe-Selò and Peterhof could furnish no novel object for her zeal; with the industry of a bee she collected every species of plant, accompanied by her governess, and brought them home to the palace. The Emperor's daughter, unknown by any one, in a simple dress and straw bonnet, rambled through the meadows and woods of the pleasure-grounds, often incurring the reproof of some precise garden overseer, laughing instead of answering him, and then playfully saying she had her father's permission. On the other hand, she was also exposed to the remarks of courtiers in this occupation, and when she was once met by one of these gentlemen in the garden, loaded with flowers, on his saying that it was too great an honour for a Princess to confer on wild-flowers, she answered coldly, "If God is not

ashamed to create them, why should I be ashamed to collect them ?"

But in the pleasant valley of Kreuth there was no strict garden overseer, nor formal chamberlains, but a luxuriance of flowers that delighted this charming girl, and awakened pleasure in the heart of her mother also. A German song, "das Alpen Horn," was at that time very popular, and made its way into the Imperial apartments, becoming the faithful companion of this distinguished party in the solitary paths of the valley. Alexandra rejoiced truly to see her daughter's fine talent for singing awaking within her, as both her health and position had so long deprived her of it, and yet in bygone days it had been one of the greatest consolations of her own mother's life in the darkest hours of sorrow. After the days had been spent in the invigorating air of the mountains, a social circle of guests assembled in the evening in the *salon* of the Empress, where the violoncello of Count Mathieu Wielhorsky touched every heart, or gay *petits jeux*, singing and dancing, amused the younger branches of the society for a few hours. According to the prescription of the physicians, the invalid retired soon to rest, and rose at an early hour—this strict discipline in addition to a simple mode of life, being beneficial to her. The immediate results of an apparent recovery perhaps deceived her as to the real condition of her powers, and she enjoyed four weeks of life almost as free and idyllic as Voss's rustic characters in *Louise*. At the end of these happy days she gave in gratitude a rural fête to the Tyrol marksmen. They assembled

with their rifles, and shot at the target in the presence of the little Imperial Court, and the Empress gave with her own hands a prize to each of the victors, as a costly remembrance of the time she had passed in their highlands. Nicholas himself appeared to escort her back, and to make acquaintance with new art-loving Munich.

His astonishment was not small when he convinced himself that the Ludwigs Strasse, in length and width, and in the number and splendour of its palaces, could vie with the Perspective in Petersburg, without indeed the stirring life of the northern capital, as the streets of Munich could scarcely count as many pedestrians as the former carriages and four. He was peculiarly desirous to learn how so small a State could furnish the means for such buildings, and for the purchase of so many art treasures; for it was clear that here as much was accomplished with a tenth part of the enormous sums lavished in Petersburg, and that the Isaac Church, built by the Emperor, cost more than the whole of Munich. Count Benkendorf, at that time Nicholas's faithful travelling companion, himself educated in Germany, advised his master to inspect the different studios and workshops, and to ascertain the moderate means necessary for such results. Among many others he visited Schwanthaler, and saw the casting of some master work. In fact he found here, instead of a splendid Crown building, a mere wooden scaffolding; instead of a number of high officials, only homely artists, and their subordinates; and discovered that his munificence encouraged and provided for many who were rather detrimental than beneficial to creative art. The Em-

peror also made the acqaintance of Klenze, the accomplished architect of new Munich, and settled with him the plan of the new Hermitage adjoining the new Winter Palace. Short as was Nicholas's stay in Munich, it had a salutary effect, under the guidance of Klenze, on the monarch, excited and wearied as he was by burdensome affairs, his warm and eager taste for art having been nearly smothered under the repetition of the everlasting monotony of daily reports and surveys. He bestowed the most earnest sympathy on all that he saw, and formed the resolution that the Hermitage should be transformed by Klenze into a spacious temple of art, worthy of the kingdom.

The Imperial family was also destined not only to be connected by art with Munich, but also by nearer and more lasting ties. Their eldest daughter, Marie, was now nineteen, and her whole heart as yet devoted to her paternal home. It was her wish, even in the event of her having a home of her own, not to leave Petersburg or the vicinity of her parents. She agreed with them in resolving that she would only give her hand to one whom her heart had already chosen. Having the most elevating example of family life before her eyes, the Autocrat Nicholas did not require to strengthen his political power by bestowing the hand of a daughter, and he was incapable of doing so, even had circumstances seemed to render it imperative. The many anxious considerations that prevail, especially in petty Courts on similar occasions, were entirely foreign to the Princess's lively feelings of independence, and her stately fascinations, combined with the most sparkling wit, had

something despotic, like the majesty of her father, and also of her grandfather, Paul. The first emotions of her heart were awakened by a young man, who, in an assemblage of Imperial and Royal Highnesses, was less conspicuous by his hereditary dignities than by his handsome figure—the young Duke Maximilian of Leuchtenberg. His father, Napoleon's adopted son, Viceroy of Italy, after the downfall of the French Emperor, met with an honourable and friendly reception in Bavaria from King Maximilian the First, his father-in-law, who created him Duke of Leuchtenberg, and bestowed on him the Principality of Eichstadt. The new Duke in this way founded the first princely House of the Bavarian monarchy, enjoyed great political privileges, and took precedence immediately after the Royal Family. This noble Prince died in Munich in 1821, bequeathing his title and dignities to his eldest son, Augustus, who by his marriage with the Queen of Portugal, Donna Maria, became a royal Prince of that country. Italy, in 1810, greeted the birth of this Prince in Milan with great rejoicings, recognising in him their future King. The child himself could hardly be deceived by such illusions, for in his seventh year his education commenced in Munich, where subsequently, after Eugène's death, he entered the University without any marks of princely rank, and then accompanied his sister, Amélie, to the Brazils, where he acquired the friendship of his brother-in-law, Don Pedro. After his return home he learned his military duties in every grade, and his zeal was by no means slackened by the tidings that the Belgians intended to offer him a royal

Crown. The dying Don Pedro bequeathed to the Prince the sword that had conquered the throne of Portugal for Donna Maria, expressing a wish that Prince Augustus should marry the Queen of Portugal. The Prince came to Lisbon, and died a few months after his marriage, universally regretted. The ducal dignity now devolved on the younger brother of the deceased, Prince Maximilian. After his studies were finished he occupied himself in learning military duties practically. The inclination to see foreign countries induced him to visit the Courts of Dresden, Copenhagen, and Stockholm; he also bestowed particular attention on the interior of those lands. The sphere of his knowledge was enlarged, and his views enlightened; his frank unassuming demeanour pleased every one; his acquirements were appreciated, while his handsome chivalrous appearance met with universal acknowledgment. In the year 1837 he was despatched by his uncle, King Ludwig of Bavaria, to the cavalry camp assembled by the Emperor Nicholas in Wosnesensk. Here the young Prince found himself not only in the midst of the greatest and most brilliant European Court, but also came in contact with other Princes from various countries. The Russian Generals had all gone through the fire of the Turkish and Polish wars, and many amoug them could date even from the French campaign.

It must have made a singular impression on Maximilian to find himself so far from home, in an inimical camp, consisting almost exclusively of former opponents of his father. The greater was his surprise

to learn that the memory of the Viceroy of Italy was held in such high esteem by his former foes, that Archduke John of Austria, in a confidential moment, exhorted the youthful Prince never to lose sight of the example of his noble father, and whatever path was opened to him, to pursue it with fidelity and honour. This distinguished circle, consisting of almost all European uniforms, assembled not only in the camp and at the Imperial table, but also appeared in those intimate family evenings, when the Empress displayed her almost unprecedented fascination, diffusing, even in the most simple conversation, cordiality and good feeling. Her eldest daughter now stood by her side, and among the noble guests quickly distinguished the handsome chivalrous Prince, who scarcely dared to lift his eyes to an Imperial Grand Duchess. But the advances made to him on every side soon loosened the fetters of his natural timidity, and his conversation attracted more interest and sympathy than he had himself any idea of. When the Imperial Court, with its guests, exchanged the camp of Wosnesensk for pleasant Odessa, many cheerful domestic evenings ensued, in which the young Maximilian took part as an old acquaintance. From here he visited Constantinople with several German Princes, and certainly did not divine that the Grand Duchess Marie cherished a lively remembrance of him. On his return to Munich in August he entered on his military duties, from those of a common dragoon up to the chief of a squadron, and in this last grade the Empress now found him, and she was also much pleased by his mother's personal charm. Their mutual relations

became closer and more intimate, and while in public it was rumoured that a connection was about to take place between the Grand Duchess Marie and Duke Max, this question was also seriously discussed by both families. It was a cause of deep sorrow to the mother to see her only remaining son removed so far away from her, one of her daughters being married in the Brazils, and another to the then Crown Prince of Sweden. The mother had also another scruple. It was not indeed indispensable that her son, as the husband of a Russian Grand Duchess, should adopt another faith, but the issue of the marriage must be baptized in the Greek Church; and the royal House of Bavaria is well known to be strictly Roman Catholic. The presence of the Emperor in Munich overcame all these difficulties. The young Duke attained his majority on the 2d October of this year; from that time he administered his own large property in Bavaria and in Italy, and on October 16th set off for Petersburg. His handsome, gallant bearing, and his noble pleasing features, excited much approbation in society, although the genuine old Russian society took grievously to heart the fact that a Prince of a non-reigning House, and of subordinate military rank, should become the son-in-law of their great Emperor. In Moscow, the intelligence was at first received as a fable, till at length Nicholas himself appeared with the young Duke, and thus obtained belief in his scheme. The Viceroy of Italy, Eugène Beauharnais, on his entry into Moscow six-and-twenty years previously, little anticipated the fearful catastrophe that befell the Emperor Napoleon

and his army, but still less did he dream that his second son was one day, as son-in-law of the Emperor, to enter the same brilliant Moscow that his father had left desolate. The change in human sentiments from one generation to another is far greater, and sometimes more inexplicable than even the vicissitudes of the atmosphere. There was now another Russia, another France, another Germany—in fact, another world; but the human heart, with all its enigmas, pretensions, and contradictions remained the same. On the 4th November followed the betrothal of the Grand Duchess Marie with the Duke of Leuchtenberg; it was the anniversary of the day when, three-and-twenty years ago, Nicholas celebrated his own betrothal in Berlin. The Emperor commanded the deputies of different denominations to consider the Duke as his fifth son.

Their Majesties returned to Petersburg in a very cheerful mood, for the health of the latter had evidently improved, and she could look forward without uneasiness to the winter, which must now be passed in the Anitschkow Palace. This might be esteemed a fortunate circumstance for Alexandra, as she was there nearer her seven children than in the Winter Palace, and the claims of the town on the Court were naturally diminished, as there was only accommodation for one family, and very limited society.

More than ever, the Empress now interested herself in the education of her children; she listened to the historical lectures read to them, and remarked, to her own astonishment, how views had altered even within one generation. In order to learn the spirit and the

light in which the youth of the present day regard the great historical periods of modern times, she read with great eagerness some recent works on history, such as *Princes and People*, the *Roman Popes of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, by Leopold Ranke; various extracts from Raumer's *Historical Diary*, the Lives of the Queens Elizabeth and Mary Stuart, by the same author; Forster's *Defence of Wallenstein*, and Thiers' *French Revolution*. Learned men with whom she conversed were amazed not only at her zeal, but at the extensive knowledge she possessed of the family relations between the European reigning Houses.

The rebuilding of the Winter Palace was meanwhile progressing with giant strides, and it was already rumoured in the city that the nuptials of the Grand Duchess with the Duke of Leuchtenberg were to initiate the new structure. The President of the Board of Works was General Kleinmichel, a man of singular energy, as soon as the question was to complete any project. He had once been Araktscheef's assistant in the government of military colonies, where he attracted Nicholas's attention by his zeal, and gained his entire confidence, while as a *De jour* general he displayed the most marvellous activity. The Imperial will was to him the most sacred law, and all means to accomplish it were equally indifferent to him. The Emperor had hoped to see the building finished in two years: Kleinmichel compelled its completion within eighteen months. The foundation walls indeed remained, and very little change was introduced in the distribution of the rooms, but the arrangements of the whole were made with the

most lavish and unexampled outlay, to which the whole kingdom contributed its productions. There were to be seen the most splendid pillars, malachite chimney-pieces and rare marbles; the old dark corridor was now lighted from above, and greater comfort and order distinguished the new building. The number of workmen, the native and foreign artists, employed by Kleinmichel, cannot be reckoned up here, and as little the sums of money swallowed up by the new palace. It was thought that a material improvement had been effected by heating it with pipes; the capital old Russian stoves were dismissed from the new palace, and in their stead high chimney-pieces substituted. The air in the palace, owing to this, was both dry and unhealthy. The exterior of the building was in no respect different from the former one; indeed, any one who had been two years absent could not possibly have conceived the palace to be a new one.

The Duke of Leuchtenberg, who, during the last six months had been absent, and occupied in managing his vast possessions, especially in Italy, appeared at the end of May 1839 once more in Petersburg, and finally settled there with the Grand Duchess Marie, as son-in-law of the Emperor. The marriage took place on the 2d of July, in the church of the new palace, with the same pomp and ceremonies that we have already described at the nuptials of Alexandra. It was a very hot summer day, and a storm burst forth during the Church ceremony, the thunder and lightning terrifying the people, hundreds of thousands having besieged the palace, who interpreted this omen in

their own way. The Austrian and Prussian Courts did not seem quite satisfied with this union; it was said that Princess Metternich blamed the alliance loudly, even in the presence of Russians of high degree. An event of the kind was by no means unprecedented at the Court of Russia, which could recall the marriage of a Prussian Princess with the Polish Prince Radziwill, who became very popular and dear to the Berlin public. The Swedish Court alone despatched an ambassador-extraordinary, whereas Prussia only sent a major. In addition to the new Winter Palace, another had also been built for the young married couple, called "Marien Palast," a fresh ornament to the city. The Duke became an "Imperial Highness," and Adjutant-General. Scarcely has there been any instance of such rapid promotion; from a Bavarian chief of a squadron to an adjutant-general, and from a "Highness" to an "Imperial Highness." The Master of the Works of the Winter Palace too was not forgotten; General Kleinmichel was raised to the rank of a Count, with the privilege of quartering the Winter Palace in his arms; medals were distributed to all those who had assisted in the building of the palace. The Duke of Leuchtenberg was particularly devoted to natural science, and, as chief of the Russian mines, and of the educational institution for that branch of knowledge, he now acquired an extensive field for his activity. Henceforth, too, his special uniform was that of an engineer of mines. Meanwhile, it was by no means easy for him to conform to the fashions of the Russian Court, and the mass of petty formalities practised at that

period. Nicholas surpassed every one in his kingdom in the strict observance of all prescribed formulæ, and therefore his eye was the more offended by the deviations practised by some at Court. The Duke, like all German princes, was a passionate lover of the chase, and to the Emperor that recreation was totally unknown. To one who has taken root in Germany for the first twenty years of his life, it is by no means easy to feel at home in Russia, or (as many a foreigner has done) he must sacrifice his own individuality, yet without thus becoming a native Russian, or even if he does so, is never regarded in that light.

CHAPTER V.

ART AND SOCIETY.

After the marriage of her eldest daughter, instead of a happy expression of countenance, a certain shade of gravity was visible in Alexandra, which indeed she never strove to conceal when she appeared in public, but which now also pervaded her inner domestic life. Although this might escape the world at large, it was very evident to those near her person, and at last she herself alluded to it, saying, "Deep regret, indeed even melancholy steals over me, when I see my family circle, in the Winter Palace, deprived of one of its members; I cannot conceal from myself that the heir-apparent will also soon leave us to form a home of his own, and shortly both my other daughters will follow the same course. The new Palace marks the close of the happiest period of my life; the brightest time I have hitherto passed, both as a wife and a mother, is irrevocably gone with the old Palace; just as my health is now deprived of youthful vigour, so does my domestic happiness seem likely soon to be broken up." And in truth fluctuations and changes are foes to happiness, and Alexandra was not deceived in thinking that she had entered on another stage of her existence. At that time, a life-

sized portrait of her was painted for the new Palace, by an English lady, Mrs. Robertson, still, indeed, in all her loveliness and the charm of her womanly nature, but her sorrowful mood was shown by a white rose that she held in her hand, the leaves of which were beginning to fall. This portrait does not emulate, either in design or colour, those master-works displayed in the Romanow Gallery of the great Catherine and of Maria Feodorowna; it is not flattered, and still less idealized, and yet it shows Alexandra in that calm, happy mood in which she was so often seen by the public in latter years. Another portrait, by the English artist Dow, the same who painted the Russian Generals of the French war, is in the Romanow Gallery: it represents the happy Grand Duchess of the Anitschkow Palace, the mother of two children—the heir-apparent and his sister Marie; the terrors of the 14th December and the cholera have not as yet blighted youthful freshness, it is the natural expression of an ingenuous princess. In Mrs. Robertson's portrait, the Imperial Majesty is fully attained, and traces of many and great experiences in life are manifest in it. Far happier than either of these English portraits, is that of the Emperor on horseback, surrounded by his staff, by the Berlin painter Krüger. Successful as this artist was in his male portraits, particularly in black and white crayons, he scarcely ever succeeded in a female face; the Empress, and her daughter Marie, by his hand, are female heads with a masculine expression. The new Winter Palace was adorned with life-sized portraits of the three Grand Duchesses, also by Mrs. Robertson; but these likewise

did not fulfil just expectations. Sometimes, in the Imperial cabinet, an unassuming but successful portrait of the Empress was to be seen, by some insignificant artist; unfortunately, these have never been multiplied and given to the public.

It seems as if the Imperial family had hitherto cherished a greater preference for painting than for music, for the Emperor decorated a succession of apartments in the new Palace with battle-pieces taken from the Russian history of Peter the Great's time up to the present day, in which he insisted on strict historical fidelity. The cabinet painter, Sauerweid, studied for years the battle of Culm, and all his details were verified by living eye-witnesses. Nicholas himself occupied his few spare moments in painting battle-pieces, and liked to share this pursuit with his daughters in Zarskoe-Selò and Peterhof. In the Winter Palace, neither the pressure of business nor the light admitted of this; it was annoying to him not to be able to visit the master-works of the adjacent Hermitage, which, after the rebuilding of the Palace, were scattered about without any plan. The Empress too seldom found sufficient time or strength to venture on a visit to these masterpieces of all schools; every expedition of the kind entailed a chill, and in those years she was so weak that she could not be too careful of her health. She therefore frequently caused her special favourites of the Italian and Spanish masters to be hung up in her cabinet, and a "Holy Family," by Murillo, remained beside her till her death.

Since the conflagration of the Winter Palace, however, a still greater love of music, and especially of

singing, operas, and chamber music, awoke in the whole Imperial family. The brilliant assemblage of thousands, formerly to be seen in the apartments of the Winter Palace, was impossible during the two successive years passed at Anitschkow, owing to the small space. The society of the town was so accustomed to the Court, that any entertainment without them seemed out of the question; so, as the society could not go to Court, they sought to induce the Court to go to them; the former being considered the head of a large family of nobles. Indeed, an aristocratic society at that time sprung up, by which all clubs and coteries were extinguished, excluding only those officials destitute both of means and cultivation. Following the example of Moscow, an aristocratic club house was built in the new Michael Street, with a magnificent ball-room and concert room, and a great number of adjoining apartments, which were inaugurated by a succession of balls, masquerades, and concerts, of course not without the presence of the Court. Those persons whose position excluded them from Court, found here an opportunity to see more closely the Imperial family. Movement was freer than in the Winter Palace, while undress uniforms, and later even a black coat, sufficed. The balls bore a certain resemblance to those in the opera-house in Berlin, where all the Royal Family appear, opening the evening by a Polonaise, and remaining quietly as spectators, without by their presence casting any *gêne* on the public. The masquerades that took place in the hall are scarcely worth mentioning. It was far more remarkable by the concerts given there, not

only by the presence of foreign artists and the Philharmonic Society, but more particularly by what were called patriotic concerts, which developed their greatest brilliancy at that period. Singing seemed to form part of the very life of Alexandra; and since Pauline von Barthenief, with her singularly charming voice, had become a maid of honour at Court, few days passed without this enjoyment. An accomplishment so highly prized by the Empress soon awakened a love for it in others, or caused existing talent to come to light in musical unions. The desire quickly became universal, to contribute to the amusement of the Court by musical talent, or to render it profitable in public for benevolent purposes, and thus patriotic bodies made use of the powers of amateurs, by giving one or more concerts during Lent for the benefit of invalids. The orchestra on these occasions was that of the Imperial Theatre, but supported and strengthened by amateurs from the highest classes. Beside stringed instruments were to be seen the epaulettes of generals and colonels; indeed some of these were scattered among the wind instruments; and excellencies, highnesses, and chamberlains in black coats, became eager sympathizers. Beside the Dioscuri of the Petersburg muse, the two Counts Wielhorsky, was the all-respected Alexis Lwoff, at that time a colonel and adjutant. The undertaking soon attracted a number of amateurs of merit, whose talents had hitherto shone in retirement, and far from Court; others were deterred by modesty from allowing themselves to be heard with those of universally recognised talent. To

the latter belonged a young colonel, Modest von Reswoy, clever by nature, but unfortunately, as is too often the case in Russia, too diversified in his pursuits. He was the best engineer, painter, and draughtsman of his day, and also the best historian and *littérateur*, and master of almost every instrument. His star had never led him into immediate contact with the Court, where he would assuredly have eclipsed many. A young officer of the Guards, Bachmetief, might well be entitled to place himself by Lwoff's side. In short, Petersburg could truly say, that she had only just discovered how musical she was. Among the ladies of the Court were many pianoforte virtuosi, chiefly instructed by Henselt, who caused astonishment by their playing; the choir of singers was formed entirely of amateurs of the Court and the highest circles; and many made a brilliant effect, if not by their beautiful voices, at all events by their grace and rich toilettes. The participation of the public in these concerts was during the first years limited by the small size of the hall in which they took place. In it a side box was reserved for the Imperial family but not sufficiently large, so that the Emperor often chose to stand among the rest of the audience in the hall—a striking spectacle, for he appeared there like a father among his children, without any token of his rank. The new hall in the club house could hold about four thousand, besides the larger Imperial box and the space assigned to the diplomatic corps. For a year past, the most celebrated of European singers, Mademoiselle Henriette Sontag, had come to Petersburg as the wife of the Sardinian Ambassador, Count Rossi.

Since her first fleeting appearance she had been cherished as a pleasing memory by the Court and the public, and now met with a cordial and respectful reception, which unfortunately had not been accorded to her in Turin; for the marriage of this Count with a German singer seemed, to the proud nobility on the banks of the Po, a crime against the aristocracy never to be forgiven. The Count was excluded from all employment for several years, and it even appeared a mark of peculiar favour when the happy pair were sent off to the Brazils on a diplomatic mission. In the course of time, the Count became Ambassador to Holland, and then to the German alliance, and the charming Countess sought opportunities, especially in Germany, to prevent her fine gifts becoming impaired; for the Countess and Ambassadress could not wholly conceal the enchanting singer. Her new position did not indeed prevent her singing in small private circles, but even all the homage entailed by her rank did not atone for the want of that enchanting murmur of applause that raises the artist for the moment from the boards to the skies. The wives of the diplomatic corps at that period were exclusively aristocratic ladies; and many of its fair members, especially in old-fashioned punctilious Germany, were so unmerciful as to make the new Countess feel that her position was false. Once on a time the horses had been taken from the carriage of the fascinating songstress, while she was drawn along by enthusiastic admirers over flowers, whereas now many a secretary of an embassy hesitated whether to pay her a visit.

Very different was the spirit and the tone of society in Petersburg in the days of Nicholas and Alexandra. We know that art was the soul of many aristocratic houses, and that talent sufficed to secure a place in the very first of these. Many virtuosi, therefore, in latter years took up their abode by the Neva, and frequented the best society in the capital. Leopold Meyer and Döhler married into great Russian families, and Adolf Henselt was sought and honoured. Thalberg, who only stayed a few months at Petersburg, was everywhere received with the utmost distinction. Countess Rossi, who in artistic fame, in culture and charm, surpassed all whom we have named, could not fail to be greeted with universal enthusiasm, both at Court and in the capital, where all houses and hearts were open to her. Shortly after her presentation at Court, she was invited by Alexandra to one of her small evening parties, where the cabinet of the illustrious lady was large enough to receive a few guests. The Empress accosted her with the same affability that she had shown eight years ago to the singer Henriette Sontag; but as Countess, she marked the distinction by conversing with her in a manner well merited by the accomplishments of this charming woman. The secret wish of Countess Rossi to display her talents was encouraged by the Empress, who found her singing in spite of her no longer being on the stage, or perhaps on that very account, now cultivated to the most ideal perfection. It was no longer the youthful Henriette of the Königstadt theatre, who by the charm of her acting and the enchantment of her voice intoxicated all

Berlin,—another state of feeling, another view of the world, had taken possession of her being; it was the mother of four children, whose tenderness and passion were poured out in song with the same artistic ability that formerly acquired for her from the Emperor's lips the name of *Mademoiselle Rossignol.* The Empress and her few guests were elevated into a sublime religious mood by the "Ave Maria" of Schubert. The Countess too did not disdain to let herself be heard in other musical *salons,* such as Count Wielhorsky's and General Lwoff's; but the whole town wished to hear her, and every day the inquiries became more eager as to whether she would take part in the patriotic concert. Henriette Sontag, the artist, hastened to fulfil this wish of the public; but Countess Rossi met with great obstacles in its fulfilment. The Court of Turin was unwilling that she should sing even in a select circle, but could not of course prohibit an amateur performance; but her appearance in public was peremptorily interdicted. The Emperor, not accustomed to see his will frustrated by such narrow-minded prejudices, desired the Turin Court to be informed, that the dignity of the Embassy could not be impaired by the Countess lending her talents in aid of a society to which the first and oldest families of his Imperial Court were eager to belong. And now followed the official consent. Unluckily the concerts in that year took place in the Engelhardt Hall, where a small portion of the public only were permitted to hear this highly admired lady, although the performance, under the pretext of a general rehearsal, was repeated three or

four times. Madame Rossi, however, moved more freely in her own *salon* and in other private houses, and a number of musical societies were formed which she inspired by her talent. In the following year, when the new nobility's hall was to be inaugurated by the patriotic concert, the Countess was as indispensable as those whose talents had been cultivated and trained by herself,—and how great was the number! By the side of this singer of European fame stood Baroness Krüdener, hitherto only known by her beauty and intellect, but she now supported the association by her incomparable contralto voice and profound musical acquirements. Prince Gregor Wolkonsky, Herr von Paschkow, and Countess Benkendorf gave the great finale from "Don Juan" and the "Huguenots" in a degree of perfection scarcely to be heard even in the Italian Opera at Paris. But both the Court and the town wished to hear the Countess shine alone in all her artistic lustre, so she sang her most beautiful German, French, and Italian cavatinas, and roused the same storm of applause as formerly in Paris, when in "Tancred" she and Malibran moved thousands to tears. The patriotic concert with such attractions eclipsed for the moment another musical association—the Philharmonic, established at the beginning of the century by the musicians of the Imperial orchestra, for the benefit of their widows and orphans, which had the merit of making the inhabitants of the northern capital acquainted with classical music of another kind. They regularly gave in public during Easter the grandest oratorios of ancient and modern times, as well

as symphonies of Beethoven and Mozart, and the great pianoforte concertos of the former master. But this sphere was too quickly exhausted, and even their best performances were not attended by large audiences. The patriotic concert attracted all who had musical ears; among the audience, beside adjutant-generals and the most elegant ladies, appeared also the Russian merchant, with his beard and kaftan, who saw with pride Russian names prominent on the programme. Meanwhile, Countess Rossi gladly accepted an invitation from the Philharmonic, not to permit this society to be thrust into the background, and to comply with the wishes of the public, by singing there, and thus the hall was once more crowded. From that time, however, she was obliged to set limits to her amiability and kindness, to prevent undue advantage being taken of her goodness. For every poor concert-giver hoped by her sympathy to acquire honour and a well-filled purse. Although her co-operation in the patriotic concert was universally approved of, still some voices were raised in opposition to her too great zeal for the Philharmonic, while others declaimed against her singing in private circles.

On the 8th November the Imperial family took possession of the new Winter Palace, more splendid than before, in every respect; but the health of Alexandra, in spite of home and foreign doctors, was still weak and fluctuating, so the largest apartments were to remain empty for the present. A quieter mode of life could alone insure tolerable health for the invalid, and therefore during this winter the new Palace was devoted to

retired domestic life. But a positive order ensued, that on Sunday evenings small concerts were to be given, always conducted by the two Counts Wielhorsky, assisted by Lwoff. In this way all native and foreign artists were gradually heard by the Empress, and these generally carried away with them a deeper impression of that illustrious lady than they made on her, for an artist rarely caught the exact tone which suited her musical feelings. The extraordinary facility of execution so prevalent at that time, on all instruments, was quite indifferent to her; the little "songs without words" of Henselt, played with tenderness by the composer himself, charmed her most, and she also liked to hear her daughters play them. But the technical skill of Ole Bull, the passionate strains of Servai, did not touch her heart.

The life and soul of these musical evenings in the cabinet of the Empress was always Countess Rossi, whose singing sunk deep into Alexandra's soul. We have already observed that, owing to the gravity of years and change of circumstances, and constant delicacy of health, Alexandra was very much altered; but the tones so full of soul of Countess Rossi, to which her heart so thoroughly responded, revived in her the feelings of her slowly vanishing youth. The other evenings of the week were passed in a still more retired manner. Count Ribeaupierre returned at that time from his post as Ambassador in Berlin, and accepted the position of a High Chamberlain, which often brought him into the vicinity of the Empress; he was one of her oldest acquaintances, and she liked his refinement of

manner, and indefatigable flow of conversation, as he contrived to cast a gay hue over the most solid subjects, and his diplomatic experiences were inexhaustible. As a reader, too, at that period of French works, he especially won the approbation of Alexandra, enabling her thus to continue in close connection with French literature.

The presentiment of the Empress, that with her entrance into the new Winter Palace, her domestic happiness would begin to vanish, seemed likely to be realized. Her state of health, notwithstanding the repose she had enjoyed during the winter, was far from satisfactory; the physicians recommended a return to Ems in the summer of 1840, and by the month of May all preparations for her journey were completed. But the reports of her beloved father, the King of Prussia's state of health, were so unsatisfactory, that filial duty would have called her to Berlin, even had she not been going to Ems. The King was considered by Alexandra not only the head of her family in Prussia, but he was equally revered with filial love by Nicholas. His death might cause a change, both in political and family relations. The anxiety of his daughter increased, and she hastened once more to embrace her suffering father. In the February of this year, news of a death arrived, which was, however, indifferent to her—Princess Elizabeth of Brunswick, the former divorced wife of Frederick-William II., died. It was, in fact, only by her death that Alexandra was reminded of her existence, but it also recalled to her that the King had entered his seventieth year. She had lived in Stettin for

more than fifty years, almost forgotten by the whole world, and died at the age of ninety-four. Alexandra knew also that 1640 was the year when the great Elector's reign began, and in 1740 Frederick II. ascended the throne, and that this year might possibly be marked for her by sorrowful changes. The King felt a decided decrease of strength, and he no longer placed confidence in his body physicians, so the most celebrated pathologist in Germany—Dr. Schönlein, of Würzburg—was called in. He came in April, and declared that he knew of no means to prevent the decay of nature taking its course. At that period Berlin possessed no monument of Frederick the Great, and Frederick-William III. did not wish to die without acquitting this debt. On the 1st June, therefore, at his own express suggestion, the foundation-stone was laid, in the presence of all the princes, and many veterans of Frederick's day, but the infirm King could only stand for a few minutes, to look on from the distant window of his simple house. The state of her father had not been concealed from Alexandra, although herself an invalid; she therefore left Warsaw, where she had just arrived from Petersburg, in all haste with her second daughter, Olga, and on June the 3d was beside her father's sick-bed. When the Emperor also came on the 7th June, the first day of Whitsuntide, his dying father-in-law scarcely recognised him. Shortly afterwards, in the afternoon, the eyes of the King closed for ever. It is needless here painfully to dwell on the greatness of this loss, especially to the Empress, for it not only affected one great country, but all diplomatic relations of the present day. It was a

new shock for the sorrowing daughter, and people recalled her prophetic words of the previous year, that an evil presentiment, more surely than the apparition of the white lady, had extorted from her.

Frederick-William was the last monarch of the Triumvirate who entered Paris victoriously a generation ago; he had succeeded in accomplishing what his ally, Alexander, failed in—to animate his people with a new spirit. Not only the Prussian State, but the whole of Germany, owes to his summons the deliverance from slavery; he is the founder of the model State of Prussia as it now is, of the Prussian Commercial League, and of the new life that animates the people of that country. No prince was ever so thoroughly identified with his subjects, or ever gained such universal confidence as Frederick-William. One of our greatest European statesmen said at his death, "He might even have inspired his people with veneration for a despotic government." When, on the 11th June, at midnight, the mortal remains of the deceased were borne from the Dome, through the Linden, to Charlottenburg, the town was not lit up with gas, as a token of mourning, and the pale moon alone shone down from the sky, in which light clouds were drifting, on the silent procession.

After these funeral obsequies, Alexandra went straight to the Rhine, which now appeared to her in a very different light from that of years gone by, when she first saw it by the side of her father and her husband. She was escorted by only a small suite, who understood and participated in her grief. Her stay in Ems was not without good effects on her health. Her

daughter Olga shared her monotonous solitude, and to her surprise and delight, her husband sent her second son, Constantine, to Ems for a week. She also received into her quiet circle two of the most celebrated men in Europe of that day,—the author of "The Huguenots," Meyerbeer, and that master of the piano, Franz Liszt. She highly esteemed the composer of "Robert," an opera that she had often heard in Petersburg, though the Russian *troupe* there could only give a very indifferent representation of it; "The Huguenots" and its author was yet equally unknown to her, although he was her countryman. Meyerbeer was as much a master of the tone of good society as of music, well informed and amusing, devoid of arrogance, and full of tact in his intercourse with the great world, so he could not fail to suit the Empress in the highest degree. In his twelfth year he was as celebrated a pianist as Liszt and Thalberg now are; he played a sonata of Beethoven's, in Schiller's presence, at his father's house, and won the applause of that prince of poets. Although favoured from his cradle by fortune, and at that time enjoying the greatest fame, he remained always modest, and now approached the illustrious Alexandra in the most unassuming manner. He himself made her acquainted with some of the best portions of "The Huguenots," so far as a pianoforte could effect this, and thus contributed to make her hours of mourning pass more quickly. Liszt surprised her more by his genius than pleased her by his person and manner, which so singularly distinguished him from all other artists.

The Empress first learned with certainty in Ems, that

after the loss of her father in Prussia, her own family circle in Petersburg was to be increased by a new member. The heir to the throne, within the last few years, had visited the greater part of Europe, and, of course, also most of the German Courts. In Darmstadt, where he only intended to make a short stay, his heart was captivated. The only daughter of the Grand Duke Ludwig II., Princess Marie, sixteen years of age, captivated the young man, both by her beauty and her intelligence, and he applied for the consent and blessing of his parents on a union with her. This princely family is not so distantly connected with Russia as may at first sight appear. The first wife of the Emperor Paul (at that time Grand Duke) was Natalie, Landgravine of Hesse Darmstadt; she died in the course of a year however, and so the two Courts remained without any further connection. But the second wife of Frederick-William II., grandmother of the Empress Alexandra, was sister of that Russian Grand Duchess who was daughter of the Landgrave Ludwig IX., and held in high esteem by the whole of the Imperial family, although unacquainted with her. It could not then be otherwise than pleasing to his mother to know that the bride of her son had been chosen from so distinguished a family. In autumn, therefore, the Empress returned home with the young bride, six months being granted her to prepare for her marriage, to learn the language, and to make acquaintance with the customs of the country and the Court. As she had so suddenly decided to become the bride of the heir-apparent, the impression made on her by such novel scenes must have been far greater

and more startling than formerly on Princess Charlotte, especially as the Hessian Court was inferior to that of Berlin. In her suite, besides her governess, Mademoiselle von Grancy, was her brother, Prince Alexander of Hesse, who at the same time entered the Russian service. Since the inauguration of the Winter Palace, many changes had occurred in the Imperial family, but one thing remained the same,—the love, and mutual esteem of Nicholas and his consort, and also the tenderness with which all their seven children were devoted to their father and mother; the confidence placed by the whole Russian realm in their Czar, and the genuine happiness enjoyed in Petersburg.

Countess Rossi still occupied, during that winter, one of the first places in society. Many a great nobleman sacrificed a ball or a rout to the honour of hearing her sing in her own *salon*. Besides the houses of the Counts Wielhorsky, Lwoff, and Count Nesselrode, she sang her choicest songs on Sundays in the cabinet of the Empress, and established regularly in her own house musical evenings, to which people crowded as eagerly as to Court. Her abode, both in town and country, was always remarkable for a succession of carriages-and-four waiting for their masters in front of her house. The mature Pasta also came to Petersburg, perhaps in the delusive hope of gaining even greater triumphs than the still youthful and fascinating Countess. The little band who arrayed themselves on her side, in opposition to Rossi, were animated rather by jealousy of the latter than by admiration for the former. Her now precarious voice could no longer

enchant as it had done years ago, which was indeed evident to herself. She, however, again sought the scene of her former fame, the opera; and, at all events, by her dramatic representation of "Tancred" and "Norma," excited universal admiration. People forgot her defective singing in her masterly acting. But at Court she by no means met with the applause and sympathy accorded to Countess Rossi. She therefore left Petersburg the following winter, without carrying out her plan of establishing an Italian opera on the banks of the Neva. But Pasta's acting excited in the Empress the wish once more to see Countess Rossi in one of her far-famed parts; for the greatest singers of the Italian opera, Malibran, Lablache, Tamburini, had hitherto disdained to come to Petersburg, fearing to injure their voices. Though this wish met with an eager response at Court, it found only morose faces in the diplomatic corps, who indeed received Countess Rossi silently in their circle as their equal, but by no means wished her to derogate from her present position by recalling her former one. But the Austrian Minister, Count Ficquelmont, was well inclined towards the plan, and having married a sister of Countess Catherina Tiesenhausen, so highly respected and esteemed at Court, his opinion easily overruled that of the other diplomatists, who even accepted with the most amiable faces an invitation to this entertainment. The concert hall of the Winter Palace was transformed into a stage, and only room left for about two hundred spectators. Among those who co-operated was Pauline von Barthenief, whom

we already know as singer and maid of honour to the Empress, and Ivan M. Tolstoi, the friend and travelling companion of the heir-apparent, who had an admirably cultivated voice; all the minor parts were also filled by Court personages. Bellini's most charming creation, "La Somnambula," was chosen for representation, the music of which interested Alexandra most of all modern Italian works. Countess Rossi played this part reluctantly, but sang with indescribable charm. Among the two hundred spectators were few who had previously seen the great songstress on the stage. Even at the general rehearsal a storm of applause burst forth, the more remarkable as the little audience consisted only of grave elderly gentlemen and ladies, who seemed to be carried back to the days of their youthful enthusiasm by this godlike spark. Many persons in the city offered large sums to the lacqueys of the Court for a place in the gallery, or in some corner, but did not succeed in their wish. At the close of this finished performance, the Empress scarcely knew how to express her thanks to the fair artist, while the gratitude of the Countess to that illustrious lady was perhaps even greater and more heartfelt; for, after a long lapse of time, like an eagle escaped from a cage, she circled once more, free and high in the air, in her own sphere, developing all the riches and magic of her art, and proving even to the most prejudiced that singing, this gift of God, is woman's brightest ornament and most powerful weapon.

Unluckily, a rumour soon spread in the city that

the Count was to be recalled by his Court next summer, and sent to Berlin or Vienna. At the same time, people exhausted themselves in suppositions as to the grounds for such a change; and yet it was probably the wish of Count Rossi himself. His own diplomatic position was too much cast into the shade by the social one of his wife; a house so brilliant and sought after demanded larger means than the Sardinian Court could afford to bestow; the Countess's own fortune scarcely sufficed to defray the necessary expenses of her toilette; the education of their four children cost fully four times more than in Germany; a longer stay, involving the same hitherto unavoidable expenditure, must have been utter ruin to the family. More than one ambassador from petty States made this experience on the banks of the Neva before Count Rossi. The Countess herself quitted Petersburg regretfully; for she knew too well that in no other place in the world would she be so highly valued as hitherto in Petersburg. She therefore joyfully accepted an invitation to the next patriotic concert, which generally formed the close of the musical performances that enlivened Petersburg during five weeks in Lent. She shone forth like a diamond in its gold setting, not without the sorrowful presentiment that its bright light was soon to be quenched. Her numerous admirers, both at Court and in the city, sincerely shared in her regrets; but still there were individuals who could not suppress their delight at her approaching departure.

After this winter, which the charms of art trans-

formed into spring brightened by the songs of nightingales, other fêtes succeeded immediately after Easter, which gave an impetus both to the populace and to the most remote parts of the city. These were in honour of the marriage of the heir-apparent with the now so-called Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrowna, who had passed the last winter exclusively in preparations for the event. She had lived in such strict seclusion from the world that she had scarcely been visible to the curious townspeople; so the more did they now throng to the vicinity of the palace to see their future Empress, especially on one particular evening, when the city was lighted up as bright as day by millions of lamps. The noble, slender form of the bride, the easy charm of her manner, called forth, wherever she appeared, thundering hurrahs. The eldest brother of the Grand Duchess, the Hereditary Grand Duke Ludwig, and Prince Emil, celebrated as a military character, Prince Wittgenstein, and various other princes, arrived to attend the wedding. The heir-apparent, after his marriage, took possession of the wing of the old palace in Zarskoe-Selò, once inhabited by Catherine the Second, still retaining his former apartments in the Winter Palace, while the adjoining corner rooms were prepared for his young wife. So the cabinets of the Empress and her daughter-in-law were situated at the two opposite ends of the same wing in the Winter Palace. The eye of Alexandra glanced along the Neva, on Wasiliostrow, the Exchange, and, on the Petersburg side, on the endless mass of islands; whereas the view of the young Grand Duchess was limited

to the somewhat dull square before the palace. It was a consolation to the mother that her son was not severed from her domestic hearth, like her daughter Marie, who in her present delicate state of health could not visit her mother so frequently as before; but all the spare time of Nicholas was devoted to his wife.

In the middle of this summer, 1841, the Countess Rossi left Petersburg for ever; but the interest the Empress showed in her future career was sincere and lively, especially at the time when a sudden change of circumstances recalled her reluctantly to her former profession. Her stay, however, in Petersburg inspired, both in the Court and in the town, an eager desire to transfer the Italian opera, for the autumn and winter months, from Paris to Petersburg. This was quite as much the result of a newly awakened love of music as a universal social requirement. For years past the Imperial family lived among the society of the city; those who did not see them at Court or in the town met them, at least from time to time, at the theatre, where for several years they sought and found some hours of relaxation. But neither the Russian nor the German opera were so constituted as to call forth decided approbation. The dread of the Italians, that they might lose their voices, had vanished with the stay there of Countess Rossi; indeed, the most distinguished of these, such as Rubini, had now very little voice to lose. Their demands, however, exceeded certainly all precedent; but the Petersburg Direction, before their arrival, fixed the *abonnement* at a price that fully covered all expenses, to be paid six months

in advance,—a still more unprecedented incident in the annals of the theatre.

The winter before the Italians, came the long-wished-for Liszt from Berlin, where the storm of applause had risen almost to idolatry, and was seen for a few minutes the same evening at Count Wielhorsky's. Long before he arrived, a brilliant company assembled, when the celebrated artist appeared in a greatcoat, and a mountaineer's staff in his hand. The impatience to hear this far-famed man was great; but he abruptly declared that he did not intend to touch an instrument till he had played at Court. Like some great nobleman, he and his suite inhabited one entire wing of an hotel, where he kept open table; and the throng of visitors was even greater than those of the unassuming Countess Rossi in previous years. But the following evening he played in the house of the Prince of Oldenburg, in the presence of Henselt, who was as yet personally unknown to him, and then at Court before an unusually large society. At first people were surprised, indeed startled, and no one ventured to pronounce any opinion. The Emperor himself remained cold and immoveable; in fact, he could not understand how any one could equally applaud Liszt's playing and Countess Rossi's singing. Nicholas's natural taste for music had never been much cultivated; to him music meant either sacred or military compositions, or popular airs and operas. Of the latter, "Don Giovanni" was the one he prized the most highly; indeed, he usually encored the masquerade trio, and one of Don Ottavio's airs. In other operas, such as "Masaniello,"

he preferred the choruses; and the same with Meyerbeer's operas. Pianoforte-playing never had the slightest charm for him; and Liszt's performance seemed only so many difficulties surmounted. But the artist was quite determined to extort the autocrat's applause. He played some military marches, and by so doing touched the chord that vibrated most strongly in the heart of Nicholas. A few days afterwards, the first public concert took place in the Hall of the Nobles, with an audience of 4000 people, the receipts being 54,000 francs; while the enthusiastic public did not for long know by what name to designate the artist. At one moment he was called the Napoleon, the Shakespeare of the pianoforte, at another, the Mephistopheles of that instrument. All coveted the honour of receiving the man of the day, at least once, in their houses; indeed, Petersburg cast a jealous glance at Moscow, fearing that he would remain there longer than by the Neva. In society Liszt was singularly charming —as intellectual and witty as Rossini, and devoid of Thalberg's aristocratic reserve towards inferior artists; and everywhere he left a striking impression. He had been accustomed from his youth upwards to the exaggerated homage of the great but frivolous Paris world, yet without being spoiled. To a great unknown public he never showed the inner depths of his feelings, and rather despised than sought the applause of the multitude. He was well aware that even the most extraordinary performances on his instrument could not replace the human voice, and that a great variety alone could impart lasting value to his playing. All his

colleagues, after being twice heard, were riddles solved; but his vast range rendered all other players superfluous. He had wisely chosen the moment of his appearance in Petersburg—after Rossi, and before the Italians. The Empress not only heard him at Court and in public, but in several private concerts; and frankly owned that he was quite another man in a small *salon* and in the large concert hall.

In the summer of this year 1842, Nicholas and Alexandra celebrated the silver wedding-day of their truly happy marriage, at which her father alone was sadly missed, because even in the year 1840 she had cause to hope that he might live to be present at this festival. Her seven children were all well and flourishing, and even the two married ones not absent in other countries. Of all the many august guests who arrived at Court on this occasion, we shall only name the King of Prussia, Frederick-William IV. The public did not enjoy more festivities than usual at this epoch, for it was kept as a quiet family festival, as in Prussia, where not only at Court, but also among the nobility, particular family days are celebrated. Rewards and marks of distinction were therefore not extended beyond the the family circle, and the invalid Empress knew no enjoyment so great as that of happy intercourse with those near and dear to her. The King, who had only seen Petersburg in the years 1818 and 1834, was now witness of the rare domestic happiness of his sister, created by herself; that sovereign only ascended the throne two years before, adorned by a nimbus of peace, while his brother-in-law, Nicholas, had been

obliged to conquer his, assailed as it was by conspiracy and revolution. From his earliest consciousness the King's eyes had been directed to the Crown, which did not however devolve on him till his forty-fifth year. Nicholas had never thought on the subject, and for fourteen days after his brother's death, refused to believe in his destination. He now, however, stood before Europe a statue finished in its smallest details, solid and grand, and his character appreciated far and near, whereas Frederick-William seemed almost an enigma. All that this noble Prince wished and aimed at, had not the smallest connection with the principles of the Emperor; the missions of both were as different as the claims and requirements of the two countries. The seventeen years of Nicholas's reign were brilliantly filled by his deeds, whereas Frederick-William had scarcely crossed the threshold, and was the object of the most ardent hopes. Both Princes were Mæcenases of art, but, even in that respect, in different directions. An inclination for art had been well defined in the King of Prussia since his youth; in the Emperor of Russia, it had only by degrees been adopted; Frederick-William in his views of art had all the romantic feelings of the period that had been cultivating the Prince during the last twenty years in peace. Nicholas was quite the man of action, and an enemy to all theories. The current of the stream of life seized him against his will, and in the midst of the surging waves his strength made him a swimmer. Frederick-William, as Crown Prince, had remained too long a mere spectator, and instead of action had recourse to thought; he was

therefore almost always misunderstood. He had restored Marienburg, the ancient fortress of the Grand Master of the German Order, entirely in the style of the Middle Ages, while Nicholas caused a magnificent edifice in accordance with the aims of his reign to be erected on the Kremlin in Moscow. Frederick-William began his reign by releasing men similar to those whom Nicholas, on the other hand, imprisoned on ascending the throne. The views of the two monarchs on sovereignty were not so widely different as might at first appear, they were only carried out in dissimilar places. Both esteemed themselves prophets and autocrats, sent by God. The Empress was a mediatrix between these opposite natures; her profound spirit was the altar before which with equal reverence they clasped hands, —she was the palladium of Russia and Prussia,—a bond of conciliation between the most contradictory elements.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GRAND DUCHESS ALEXANDRA NIKOLAEWNA.

A SILVER wedding-day marks an important segment in the life of every family; that of Nicholas and Alexandra was among the happiest that had ever been celebrated. A succession of memories passed before the illustrious couple, including all that human life can offer, of joy and sorrow, and, in princely life, of splendour and terror. The Crown had brought with it much grandeur and renown, but still greater alarms and burdens than the Palace of Anitschkow, and both looked on their family as the only enduring and compensating happiness. All political circumstances had changed since the Emperor's ascension of the throne; the three Monarchs of the Holy Alliance were no more, the bond had dissolved of itself, even the relations to neighbouring states threatened change, but their family and their domestic felicity had continued the same, and also their cordiality towards the public at large, which remained equally bright and unclouded. With a thankful heart, Alexandra acknowledged how much happier she had been than both the previous Empresses, one of whom was deprived of her consort in the most terrible way, while the other never truly possessed her hus-

band's heart. It was also her husband's belief and conviction, that the brightest hours of his stirring life had been passed in the cabinet of his wife; the wish of both therefore was, that whatever change there might be in political events, their family happiness might long continue unimpaired. No palace, however, is strong enough to ward off misfortune, no golden chamber can exclude care and sorrow, and the most adverse fate often first meets us with the most cheerful mien. While the health of Alexandra excited fresh anxiety from time to time, no one anticipated that death had marked for his own another, and a blooming member of the Imperial family.

Few houses in Europe could boast of three such richly endowed daughters as that of Russia. Olga, the elder of the two still dwelling in their parents' home, had indeed finished her education, but her zeal was by no means diminished for studying history and literature, music and painting. Alexandra, three years younger than her sister Olga, was near the close of her education, but, like her eldest sister, animated with the warmest interest for art and knowledge. The early childhood of this latter Princess had fallen in the most troubled times of the Imperial house; she was six months old when the terrible 14th December obliged the child to be removed from Anitschkow to the Winter Palace. The Empress-mother, Maria Feodorowna, only lived in her memory as a distant passing vision; this ancestress had some difficulty in at once distinguishing her youngest grandchild from her other playmates in Zarskoe-Selò. While

the father's features were very early and unmistakably imprinted on both the elder sisters, even in girlhood the third was pronounced to bear less resemblance to her family than the rest; in her thirteenth year, her lineaments seemed suddenly to recall forcibly her mother and also her grandmother, Queen Louise. Among the retinue of the Empress were still persons who retained a lively recollection of Queen Louise, and who were struck by the likeness. A change of governess had taken place in the education of the two younger sisters, which fortunately Alexandra escaped. Both her governesses were English, and exercised a beneficial influence over the young Princess, who from her twelfth year showed indescribable grace in all her movements, especially in dancing, so that her parents liked to look at her; even in her mode of walking in the street, where she appeared in all her simplicity and quite unknown, with her governess, she struck every passer-by as a rare vision. From her features beamed even more than the wonted courtesy of a princess, or the easy cheerfulness of a girl; beyond all others, even her sisters, she was distinguished by elevation of thought, and goodness. Her slightest smile lighted up her whole face, her glance was full of intellect and heart, and on her lofty brow was written true dignity. Many beauties cause astonishment, but permit the spectator no nearer approach; the youthful Alexandra delighted by her first few words, for they came from the warmest depths of her heart. Neither pride nor cold reserve, but intellectual life and spirit, animated her whole being. From her

tenth year she showed great musical dispositions; she listened with reverence to adagios in Beethoven's sonatas and symphonies, and played them in her thirteenth year with rare intelligence. She often lamented that, as a princess, she was less likely to know the riches of life to their full extent, and could not suppress her longing to see nature on a grander scale than that of Petersburg. She started up from joy at hearing that she was to accompany her mother to the Bavarian Highlands and to Kreuth—"Sophie Iwanowna," cried she in delight to her governess, "we shall see the Alps, and pluck Alpine roses! mamma means to take us with her abroad! I know for whom I shall bring home nosegays." And yet she did not without deep emotion take leave of the Anitschkow Palace, her occupations, and her brothers and sisters, begging the latter to accompany her as far as Strelna.

The excellent old King in Berlin saw his granddaughter and her two youngest brothers, and pressed them all to his heart. The youthful Alexandra wrote regularly to her sisters during her journey, describing her various impressions. "I have been wandering in the very heart of Germany, in Nürnberg, and now begin to understand the pomp of the Middle Ages;" and from the Bavarian Highlands she wrote thus:—"No words can describe my mood; what happiness to be at the foot of the Alps! I imagined it all beforehand as so beautiful, and yet I find it far more so." And how charmed was the Empress to share with such a daughter an enjoyment that, in spite of all the blessings of her lot, had as yet been denied herself. Absorbed in the

powerful impressions made on her by the journey, the young girl returned in the autumn to Zarskoe-Selò. In the overflowing fulness of her heart she related to all the various bright scenes she had witnessed, but notwithstanding every effort she could not conceal a severe cough. It also struck every one that during the last five months she had grown to an unusual degree—all unpleasant symptoms were ascribed to her rapid growth, or to a chill on the mountains, and various other causes, and long considered a matter of little consequence. The cough indeed decreased, and entirely disappeared for a time, but continued to return more or less, though pronounced both by the physicians and those around her a mere chance ailment. Sometimes it was ascribed to the stormy weather of the Northern sky, sometimes to the dry heat of the Winter Palace, or to too rapid a development, but still, on the whole, no alarm was felt. After her return from foreign lands, the charming gift of song broke forth with power in the youthful Alexandra. Her voice in speaking acquired greater melody, and was listened to with pleasure; in her botanical rambles, in the park of Zarskoe-Selò, she sometimes gave way to her inward impulses, and sang without words, but the music was always of a serious import. Pauline von Barthenief first discovered her fine voice, and attracted the attention of her Imperial mistress to it. She had concealed her charming talent from her mother, esteeming it, in her youthful modesty, trivial. The Empress now took counsel with Countess Rossi on the subject, who declared that she had never heard a voice of greater

compass and fulness; for it embraced fully three octaves—and she eagerly urged so rare a gift being cultivated, but with precaution. The Emperor contrived to steal many moments not only to listen to his daughter, but to join her and Pauline Barthenief in singing sacred trios. An Italian of the name of Soliva was chosen to teach the youthful Alexandra, who seemed at length to become aware of her precious gift.

After one year of instruction, however, the teacher spoke very seriously to the governess on the state of the Princess's health, who immediately communicated her anxiety to the physicians. They considered the interference of the Italian in their vocation as both uncalled for and officious, and their opinion tranquillized even the anxiety of the mother. In short, no measures were taken to check an incurable evil. In her appearance, the young girl looked more blooming than ever, although her cough obstinately returned from time to time. She was seldom seized by it when singing, and thus all indulged in feelings of the most entire security, and she herself least of all had any fears about her own health. The Italian teacher was dismissed from the office he had hitherto occupied, on other grounds, and left Russia. The Empress applied again to Countess Rossi, who proposed that her own teacher, a Mademoiselle Cecca, of Prague, should be summoned, and offered, till the arrival of that lady, to instruct the girl herself. Thus the young songstress was trained in the best school, a proper method also preventing her weak lungs being over-strained,

while she was quite delighted to know that she possessed such a talent, hitherto scarcely suspected by herself, and also that it was to be cultivated by the greatest singer of the present day. When her natural timidity was vanquished, she sang in almost as great perfection as her teacher, Goethe's song, "Ye bloom and fade, sweet roses," little anticipating that she was herself one of the fading flowers of her song.

This melody was dedicated to Countess Rossi, by one of her enthusiastic admirers, and she sung it in sympathetic circles, with the whole ardour of her heart and magic of her voice. Her pupil was powerfully affected by it, and never rested till she could sing it herself in a certain degree of perfection. Any one who at that time saw this young Princess in her loveliest bloom and apparent strength, or who heard her sing, could not but admit that Heaven had gifted one of its fairest creations with every intellectual endowment and every splendour earth could bestow. After Countess Rossi quitted Petersburg the new teacher one day remarked to the governess that the voice of her pupil sometimes made an uneasy impression on her, for some of her notes occasionally indicated an infirm organization. The startled governess this time, besides applying to the attendant physicians, went straight to the Empress herself, who wished that Mandt should examine her daughter with a stethoscope. In any other family this could have been done without difficulty; at Court, however, among the dozen physicians, arose a violent storm, not only against Mandt but against the Empress herself. Mandt had previously lost the confidence of

the Grand Duchess Marie, and consequently that of many other ladies of the Court, who all now united in blocking up his path to the youthful Alexandra. Dr. Rauch, the physician in attendance on the Princess, had already been removed by the intervention of Mandt, and it was to be feared that he would soon be entirely banished from Court. In order to prevent this, Mandt's visible and invisible enemies, and their name was legion, made every effort to tranquillize the Empress and to excite hatred in the heart of her innocent child towards Mandt, so that no examination might take place. Thus the evil silently increased, to which in a short time she was irrevocably to fall a prey.

In the town nothing was known of what was passing in the Palace; a few persons only, in nearer connection with the Court, who knew the Grand Duchess, and judged by her blooming appearance, declared that Mandt had very properly been prevented from once more interfering with affairs that did not concern him, and that the danger was imaginary.

Being now in her eighteenth year, Alexandra joined the evening family circle of her mother. The few gentlemen who appeared there, such as Ribeaupierre, Nesselrode, Kisselew, the ladies being Frau Krüdener, and Tiesenhausen, Princess Soltikow, and the two Counts and Countesses Wielhorsky, could not find words to express their admiration of the young Princess. Often in life we hear the criticism that a royal lady is either too much or too little of a princess; that one never descends from her altitude while another

never rises to hers, but Alexandra Nikolaewna disarmed criticism; all her words were the faithful transcript of her warm heart and of her pleasing gaiety; hitherto the invalid mother had seen her less frequently by her side than her two elder sisters, but she now began to count every hour that her youngest daughter could pass with her. Her father also, though so closely occupied, devoted more attention to her, and they often sang and painted together.

For her occupations all continued. With the same zeal that she felt for singing and the pianoforte, she also studied the history of past ages and the literature of other countries, and passed hours in the gardens of Zarskoe-Selo and Peterhof, eager to discover a new species of plant, or by the sea, in Peter's little Dutch house, enjoying nature and inhaling the sea breezes. She often sat for hours in Zarskoe-Selo, beside one of its many lakes, feeding the swans, who at last knew her perfectly, and flocked round the cottage as soon as they caught sight of her at a distance. During the summer of 1843 all anxiety about her health seemed at rest, some faint remains at most of her former indisposition being still perceptible. At the end of May, as usual, the Court quitted dry Zarskoe-Selo for damp Peterhof, and the health of the young girl seemed even to withstand this change. The two unmarried daughters still lived with their father and mother, and governesses, in the little country house of Alexandria, and in the course of the day received their teachers, and enjoyed the numerous walks in the vicinity of this charming country town; but from the hour of dinner

they formed part of the Imperial circle. Here they gradually became acquainted with the motley crowd that made up a Court, and especially men hitherto known to them only by name, and experienced the first illusions of life; but they paid a genuine tribute of gratitude to those who, by their intellectual conversation, succeeded in interesting their youthful minds.

In the more restricted Imperial circle politics and passing events were almost invariably interdicted; the Emperor did not permit any allusion to be made to them even by those to whose hands they were confided, unless at a fitting time and place. The tone, therefore, of the conversation was always cheerful and unconstrained; it was a family circle, unfettered by the pomps of the throne and the burdens of a crown, including only a few friends, who knew how to enjoy those precious moments of freedom. The children often prepared a surprise for their father and mother by arranging *tableaux vivans*, selecting the Emperor's favourite subjects; they acted plays, and extracted a smile of approbation even from their grave father, on seeing Constantine, a youth of fifteen, appear in a comedy as Frederick the Great, and act the character admirably. The daughters also decorated his cabinet with paintings by their own hands, and of their own composition, in which their father took more delight than in the masterly works of a Horace Vernet or a Gudin.

No one thought of matrimony for these two Princesses, and least of all for Alexandra. In the summer of this year, however, Prince Frederick-William of Hesse

came to pay a visit to Peterhof. This Prince, a branch of the Electoral line, was the son of that Landgrave William who married the sister of the then King of Denmark, Christian the Eighth, and had long lived in Copenhagen. Christian the Eighth's only son married, for the second time, in 1841, but had no children, so there seemed little hope of his bequeathing the throne to his own descendants; a prospect, therefore, of succeeding to the Danish throne seemed to present itself to this Prince under favourable auspices. He was not so tall as the Emperor, the heir-apparent, his brother Michael, or the Duke of Leuchtenberg, but he was a distinguished-looking young man, with a gay and open countenance. He shared the Court life at Peterhof, attending the camp and the manœuvres, their expeditions, and the soirées and balls the Emperor gave for his children. At these the two sisters surpassed all the rest of the society, looking like two beings of a higher sphere. The Prince possibly arrived without the intention of forming an alliance with the Russian Court, but two such lovely forms could not fail to attract his attention and to make the deepest impression on him. The younger, Alexandra, had no idea, in her modesty, that the Prince was chiefly captivated by herself, and rather sought to avoid than to encourage his attentions. She would scarcely believe it when she was told that the Prince's suit was made to her and not to her elder sister. But when she actually realized the truth, she was overflowing with happiness, and, in the impulse of her heart, wrote to a friend abroad,—"I am so happy

that I have nothing more to wish for." Owing to circumstances, however, the Prince could not exchange his own home for Petersburg so easily as the Duke of Leuchtenberg had done, while the young Alexandra had the certainty of leaving her native country after her marriage and making her permanent home in Denmark.

The first and most natural wish of the mother and daughter was to obtain a more intimate knowledge of the habits and customs and political relations of that island before settling there. The princess therefore, after the departure of her betrothed, resumed her studies, in order to acquire more information about the Danish Court, where she was in future to reside, its historical development, and its present component parts. She was the first daughter of the Imperial House who was to be entirely severed from her home and transplanted to a country with which Russia had as yet no family connection. Denmark assumes no very prominent place in the history of the world, nor could the interest of a Princess be much captivated by it. With all the cultivation gradually diffused through that land by the efforts of the Government, Danish sympathies lie more with the sea, which bounds their home on every side, and which they still regard as their ancient Norman Fatherland. The fleet is their pride and their renown, and their greatest men are naval heroes. Hitherto the Grand Duchess had scarcely formed any opinion about this country, but she looked on everything now in a rose-coloured light. If any one spoke of the beauty of the Bosporus at Constantinople, she

agreed, but added playfully, "But not so beautiful as the Sound at Copenhagen." Another time the subject of discussion was the art treasures in the Louvre, when she rejoined, "And yet not so rich in the masterly works of Thorwaldsen as the Frauen Kirche." She enjoyed the happiness of the future already in pleasant day-dreams,—a poor compensation for the sad fate that threatened her. She had been told that in summer she was to take possession of a country-seat in the midst of the finest oaks and beeches, commanding the same view of the sea as Peterhof (the spot of her most cherished memories) of the Gulf of Finland. Thither her imagination carried her for hours together, regulating and arranging, anticipating visits from her Petersburg friends, whom she was to entertain hospitably.

Although she herself little anticipated that during these dreams and the reality of her happiness, the seeds of death were springing up more and more in her fair breast, still this could not escape those around her. For the blooming bride became pale, her charming singing, to which love impelled her so strongly, was stifled by a modest cough, and, to her great regret, she was obliged to renounce this delightful gift. It became a serious question whether the nuptials must not be deferred for a whole year, but, at an important consultation of physicians, the sharp glance of Dr. Mandt was unfortunately dispensed with. No one ventured to decide whether blindness or thoughtless subserviency to the will of the Emperor caused the marriage to be fixed for January 1844. During the autumn and winter

months the youthful Alexandra resumed her studies about Denmark with unwearied zeal, and her happy dreams were not disturbed on learning, by historical proofs, that the Court of Denmark, more than any other, was entangled in a miserable network of intrigues and cabals. The bridegroom made his appearance at Christmas, and preparations began for the eventful day; but no improvement was visible in the health of the bride, and her illness seemed at length to force itself on her with sorrowful conviction. She looked forward to her wedding-day with the anxious wish that it was over, for she feared that her strength would not suffice for the ceremonies, which our reader already knows, from our description of similar days, to be most fatiguing.

The town was, however, anticipating with delight the January festivities, for, at the same time with those of Alexandra Nikolaewna, the nuptials of the second daughter of the Grand Duke Michael, Elisabeth, were to be celebrated with the Duke of Nassau. This Grand Duchess was nearly a year younger than the Imperial bride, blooming, and less delicate in figure than Alexandra—less animated, reserved, but richly gifted, and sharing with her cousin an extreme love of music. She had been educated with her two sisters in the Michael Palace, under the eyes of her admirable and intellectual mother. She only entered the Winter Palace on occasions of ceremony, and spent her few hours there in the apartments of her cousins. All three sisters, therefore, were in some degree estranged from the inevitable splendour of the throne; their education had

been completed in a more natural atmosphere than that of a Court; thus all three were nearer the realities of life. The Grand Duke Michael was a simple, unassuming, upright man, the first and most faithful subject of his august brother, and felt happier without any exterior pomp. The features of the father were as unmistakably imprinted on the daughter, as those of the Emperor on the Duchess of Leuchtenberg. As the Grand Ducal family was limited to these three daughters, Michael would have preferred their marrying in his own vicinity, but he bestowed his cordial blessing on the daughter about to leave him. Elisabeth did not require to embellish her future residence near the Rhine by her imagination, for scarcely on earth is a more lovely country to be found than Nassau; and the intelligent Elisabeth could appreciate this as a special happiness. The wedding of Alexandra was to take place on January 16th, and that of Elisabeth to follow on the 19th. The whole town wished to contribute to these festivities,—the entire body of merchants by a permanent benevolent institution, and the nobility and the great world by a representation of Wieland's "Oberon" in the Michael Palace. On January 15th, the very day previous to her wedding, Alexandra was still eagerly occupied with her studies, and reluctantly laid them aside for the next few weeks. At one o'clock in the forenoon the Italian opera singers rehearsed the pieces that they were to sing during the great banquet, all selected by the bride herself, among others the beautiful quintett from Donizetti's "Lucia." She was deeply affected during its performance, and it was re-

marked that it was not the music alone that caused her tears.

The ceremonies being precisely the same with which the reader is already acquainted, we need not recapitulate them. Among the thousands of invited guests who filled the apartments, were many who, for the first time, saw the illustrious bride, and they were startled by her pallid and suffering appearance; but next day she seemed as gay as usual, and greeted all around her with fascinating cordiality. When the wedding of her cousin Elisabeth followed in presence of the same society, many declared they thought her also peculiarly pale. On the Neva, January is the very coldest month, and in that particular year the weather was unusually severe. Not only feeble constitutions were attacked by illness, owing to the fatigue of so many fêtes, balls, and banquets, but even those in the most robust health succumbed under such trying exertions. The representation of "Oberon" in the Michael Palace formed the close of the festivities. The beauty and splendid adornments of all those who co-operated have scarcely ever been equalled in the world, and Wieland would have been amazed to see his boldest fancies surpassed in magnificence by reality. All that Russia possessed in pearls, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires were to be seen glittering that evening in the palace. Many ladies wore, on their own persons, jewels to the amount of several millions in value; and it was asserted that several European countries combined could not display so many. This Imperial splendour in the rooms of the Palace was still further heightened and enlivened by

the enchanting singing of Italians,—Rubini, Tamburini, Madames Viardot and Grisi. To the spectators it seemed no longer an earthly kingdom, and they forgot that outside the palace there was deep snow and 17 degrees of cold. And in the midst of all this brilliancy, the newly married Grand Duchess said to one of her suite,—"How I long for rest! How I rejoice at the thoughts of my quiet cabinet and my occupations." The Duke of Nassau left Petersburg shortly after with his bride in the deepest snow, but Alexandra Nikolaewna took possession of a quiet wing of the Winter Palace, with her husband, and seemed quite happy in resuming her old habits. The few persons who still saw her observed a striking change in her whole nature. It was not only that youthful freshness had vanished for ever, without leaving a trace behind, but her natural mood seemed oppressed by some invisible evil, and the bright weeks of her honeymoon were obscured by much suffering. Everything indicated an approaching time of bitter sorrow and severe trial for the parents. The loquacious lips of society soon ceased speaking of the splendours of the past festivities, and confidentially whispered in horror to each other a few words about the precarious state of the bride.

Lent soon came, when the Court removed to the Anitschkow Palace, and the invalid followed, though with difficulty. The physicians now admitted that she was seriously ill, but not dangerously so, and placed their hope in the all-invigorating spring for her complete recovery; so that though the Court felt much concern, they were noways alarmed or afflicted. In

the city, however, the darkest presentiments, the most gloomy prophecies, were circulated from mouth to mouth and from house to house, and it may truly be said that the voice of the people often judges more correctly than the wisdom of experienced physicians.

The second son, Constantine, at this time underwent his final examination in the presence of his family. His sister, Alexandra, had long anticipated with pleasure being present on this evening, as she had a particular love for this brother, both being endowed with a lively sensibility for music, susceptibility to the beauties of nature, and sacred enthusiasm for great historical characters. For years they had passed half-an-hour together every evening, relating mutually the events of the day, and discussing any new information they had acquired during their studies; and now Alexandra was forced to absent herself from this important evening, to her great and just grief. She felt that her illness was more serious than she had hitherto believed. The mother remained during the whole of Lent near her daughter, but was tranquillized again by the doctors, and referred to the spring for comfort. Notwithstanding all pressure of business, the Emperor was in the habit of visiting any invalid in his family three or four times a day, to observe their condition himself, but even his intelligent and sympathizing eye was deceived as to the danger of his daughter. At Easter the Court returned to the Winter Palace, but the bride was obliged to remain at Anitschkow. This circumstance caused feverish excitement in the capital, and the attendant physicians were openly blamed. The

Anitschkow Palace, when the Court have left it, usually stands desolate, and the public pass without bestowing a thought on it; but now it was besieged the whole day by thousands, who wished to hear some tidings of the state of the poor sufferer. Too soon were Court and city to be terribly enlightened. The Emperor had resolved on a journey to London, which, indeed, was to remain a mystery to the city. For this purpose the whole Court was first to remove to Zarskoe-Selò, and Nicholas, next morning early, quietly to set off on his journey. The Grand Duchess, in this change of plans, could not of course remain in the capital, especially as all hope of her recovery was founded on country air. Dr. Rauch, her own medical attendant, was prevented on that day accompanying his illustrious patient to the country, and requested his colleague, Markus, to undertake the office in his place. Markus and Mandt, during the Emperor's absence, were appointed to remain near the Empress and her daughter Olga, and therefore were in the habit of regularly removing with the Court to the country, whereas Rauch only visited them in the country on particular hours and days. All other members of the family had their own doctors, the Emperor several, and he was accompanied by Dr. Reinhold on his journey to London. It was three months since he had seen the Grand Duchess Alexandra, and now he stood before her startled and speechless. She was changed almost beyond recognition during the winter; hers was the pallor and debility of one slowly but surely dying; instead of the youthful gaiety she was wont to show, deep-seated death was written on

her features. After having recovered from the first shock of his sympathy, he escorted the invalid to Zarskoe-Selò, where he went instantly to Nicholas, and boldly told him that he must defer his journey, as his daughter was advancing with sure steps to death. The Emperor asked whether Markus was his daughter's own physician, and if this verdict was grounded on months of observation. Markus was obliged to admit that it was not so, when Nicholas commanded that Dr. Rauch, and Scholz, the accoucheur, should attend next morning in his cabinet before his journey. The two gentlemen arrived next day, not having previously spoken with Markus, indeed without any idea of the report their colleague had made to the Emperor, who first turned to Scholz, and inquired as to the state of his daughter, and her expected accouchement. He replied that all was following the natural course of things. Then he questioned Rauch as to the state of her lungs, and his reply was, that though not better, she certainly was not worse. "So I may proceed on my journey?" said the Emperor interrogatively, and as no answer followed, he walked rapidly to his carriage and drove away. Scholz had expected that Rauch would make serious representations to the father, and courageously express his sense of the danger, which, without their knowledge, Markus had already pointed out and betrayed; he was amazed at the indifference of his colleagues, and sought to detain the departing Nicholas, and to speak even more explicitly, but the carriage disappeared with the speed of a locomotive. With all his courage, Scholz could not reply to the

Emperor's question; indeed, as an *accoucheur*, it was neither his privilege nor his duty to interfere with anything beyond his own functions. Rauch now saw the sword of Damocles suspended over his head, and agreed that Markus should make his report to the Empress, who was indeed to be spared as much as possible, for she was suffering more than ever. The mother, however, was prepared, as for a long time past she had been tormented with alarm about her daughter, and desired certainty. She instantly decided on calling in Dr. Mandt for a consultation, and strove to dissipate in her daughter's mind the prejudices against that physician that had been instilled into her. At that period Mandt was the first and only physician in Petersburg who used the stethoscope to ascertain the state of the lungs, and, for this very reason, he was scoffed at by the other doctors; but we must not forget that this German discovery was universally recognised and practised earlier than by ourselves by the French. Alexandra yielded at once dutifully to the wishes of her mother, and Mandt presented himself in her room next day with three other physicians. The auscultation had no result, and one lung did not seem affected, so that those present already began to smile; but when examination followed of the second lung, and Mandt made her answer the question, "How did your Highness sleep last night?" the answer was accompanied by the most fearful rattling within, that so startled even the stoical Mandt that he let his instrument fall. She had herself pronounced her sentence of death. Mandt imparted the fact to his colleagues in Latin, in order to spare the

mother such a shock, but this mysterious language struck the illustrious lady as strange, and she demanded to be thoroughly enlightened as to the condition of her daughter. They went to her cabinet, and now, from the lips of the physician in whom she placed entire confidence, she learned that it was scarcely possible to save the life of her daughter, nay, more, that if her husband's absence were prolonged for several months, he would perhaps no longer find her among the living. The next step resolved on was to despatch several messengers in different directions, by sea and by land, to seek her father. Mandt offered to go himself by sea to find him if possible.

The Emperor had not left his carriage since he quitted Zarskoe-Selò, and arrived on the fifth day in Berlin, to the surprise of every one, and, after seeing the monument of Frederick the Great, hastened on with the speed of lightning, and consequently arrived in London before either of the two messengers could arrive on German or foreign soil. The tidings reached him by telegraph in London, which he left seven days afterwards, and travelled home with the same marvellous speed. At a stage between Köthen and Berlin, on his return, the second messenger met him—a person belonging to his own household. The Emperor being obliged to wait for the Berlin train, got out of the carriage to breathe some fresh air, and although at some distance from the station, he was recognised and surrounded by a curious crowd.

The attention of the people was excited, and their surprise also, when suddenly a plainly dressed gentle-

man approached the traveller, and spoke a few confidential words. The grave face of the Emperor, at each succeeding word, became more and more agitated, and his eyes at last filled with tears. He embraced with cordial warmth the bearer of the melancholy news, gave him his benediction on his journey, and then hurried through the crowd to rejoin his dying daughter.

The Grand Duchess was living in the new Alexandra Palace at Zarskoe-Selò with her mother, who sat the whole day beside her bed, and observed, with a sad heart, that her daughter was so hopeful, seeming scarcely to feel her weakness, and indulging in the fairest dreams for the future. The unhappy Dr. Rauch had the melancholy conviction of having utterly failed, and dreaded the return of the Emperor like the day of judgment; he was in a state of such feverish restlessness that an aberration of mind was apprehended. Nicholas, however, was far more humane than his people knew or believed; in true Christian resignation, he saw in this trial an affliction sent by God, to which the highest as well as the lowest must submit, and for which no man can be called to account. Rauch was indeed dismissed from his situation, but not in anger. The Prince of Hesse alone, the husband of the poor sufferer, complained loudly of the carelessness of the physicians, who, by urgent representations to the Emperor, might have delayed the marriage, and thus possibly saved this precious life. He summoned his own body physician from Copenhagen to the sickbed of his wife, but he too saw no means to ward off death.

The afflicted parents now passed the most agonizing weeks of their whole existence, for they were compelled to see the life of this charming daughter slowly and hopelessly ebbing away before their eyes. Markus, Mandt, and Scholz scarcely left the invalid for the next few weeks, and the father and mother sat day and night by her bed, with tears in their eyes. The sympathy of the people was great indeed, and even those Russians who were travelling in foreign parts, renounced every amusement at that time. By the beginning of July, both parents and doctors gave up their last hopes, but not so the invalid herself; although a sick couch of four months had gradually caused extreme debility, she bore her sufferings with angelic calmness, and in Christian submission, but not without the hope shortly to be able to travel, and always speaking words of comfort to her afflicted parents. The only member absent of the family was Constantine; a sea voyage that he made every summer having taken him from the White Sea to the North Cape, and from thence to Copenhagen, in order to see the future abode of his sister, in winter and summer, in all its details, that he might give her every particular. He returned to Cronstadt on July 24th, and hurried on to Zarskoe-Selò, but could not see his beloved sister that day, because they dreaded the too great excitement, for now she lay dying, but she smiled once more on being told that Constantine was to arrive next day. When he went in to see her on the ensuing morning, she had scarcely strength to stretch out her hand to him, and he too with difficulty recognised his sister, for it was another

face, another voice; she seemed to revive when her brother spoke to her of the country seat, Bernstorff, that he had seen at Copenhagen. She gradually sunk into sleep, and woke next day quite restored to consciousness, but her weakness was so great that her death was momentarily expected, and yet she survived the whole of that day and the following night. Indeed, on the 28th, life seemed to return, and all, even the physicians, had a ray of hope, but alas, how delusive! Two lives were to be extinguished at the same moment. At nine o'clock in the morning she bore a son, calmly, and without suffering; the infant was at once baptized, and named William. The mother was in ecstasy at having heard the cry of her child, the only sign of this life of two hours. She then asked for breakfast, and ate it with unusual appetite. A sound sleep inspired even her father with fresh hope, but Dr. Scholz silently shook his head. Four hours afterwards she awoke, and spoke of her joy at being a mother, and at having heard the voice of her infant. During these few words, darkness seemed to fall on her eyes, and she asked who were in the room. The sorrowful governess answered, "Your father and mother, and the priest." "Father," said she to him, "straighten my limbs, I am going to sleep." With difficulty she cast a parting glance, from her half-closed eyes, on those around her bed. In a faint, choking voice, she said "Farewell," and fell asleep to wake no more. The brothers and sisters were called into the room, and the whole sorrowing family knelt down with the priest and prayed.

The Imperial family, two days after, carried the coffin with the embalmed corpse through the garden into a corner room, formerly used as a chapel by the priests. Here the public had access to see the coffin for two days, and even those who had not known her in life mourned with her friends, and paid her the tribute of farewell tears. She was conveyed during the night in her own landau carriage, and accompanied by her family, to the fortress in the capital, where the procession arrived in the most profound silence at one in the morning. Here also the body lay in state for two more days, and then followed the interment, and all the ceremonies with which the reader is already familiar. The Court proceeded the same day to the retired Peterhof, and the Empress, in her grief, secluded herself from the world for many months. She passed this melancholy time chiefly in corresponding with sympathizing persons of other countries, and was astonished to find how widely spread were the regrets for the deceased. The bridegroom, so happy and so surprised by his own good fortune the previous year, now left the cradle and the grave of his happiness a widower, and carrying with him to his home only sorrow and tears.

The opinion was universally entertained that Alexandra's precious life might have been saved, if she, like her cousin, had quitted the rude climate of the North immediately after her marriage, and her cousin Elisabeth was esteemed fortunate in living on the beautiful banks of the Rhine. In fact, most travellers from Petersburg did not fail to seek her out

in her paradise, and were thus eye-witnesses of her felicity. Nearly all who returned thence, and who visited her in Biebrich or the Platte, found her more gay and charming than ever, and attributed this to the mild climate. Her father and mother almost daily received people who came back from the Rhine, and enjoyed the happiness of their daughter in the reports of these travellers. The parents were therefore thunderstruck when a telegraphic message arrived to say that their beloved daughter and her new-born infant had died on the 28th of January, on Alexandra's wedding-day, and exactly six months after her cousin. These dreadful tidings could scarcely be believed in Petersburg. Like Cassandra, the Empress, in a prophetic spirit, declared, after the marriage of her daughter Marie, that sad changes awaited the happy family circle; the Duchess of Leuchtenberg also had lost a child. The Grand-Duke Michael and his wife had not even the consolation of closing the dying eyes of their daughter, and, racked by anxiety, could not for a time ascertain the circumstances and cause of her sudden death. Thus one mourning rapidly succeeded another in the capital, and the usually gay Petersburg appeared, during this entire winter, gloomy and dark. For this was not a mere Court mourning, like that of other countries, where prince and people were so widely apart; it was more than ever manifest that the Imperial House is the head of a large family, and that the mourning of the whole of Petersburg was in their hearts.

The Court went from Peterhof to Gatschina, where

they passed the autumn in strict seclusion. The physicians considered the Empress so weak, that they advised her avoiding those persons who had been specially dear to her deceased daughter, for the poor lady exhausted herself by tears and excitement, and swoons almost daily ensued. She was therefore restricted to her usual Court retinue, who sought to interest her by solid reading, avoiding, in conversation, everything that could remind her of her dear departed child. An old and intimate friend of their circle in the Winter Palace, after his return to Russia from abroad, not aware of the physicians' prohibition, went straight to see the Empress, and was announced, but she fainted away on hearing his name, and her attendant sent for the Emperor. When he saw their old but distressed friend in the anteroom, he at once knew what had caused his wife's swoon, and took him to his own cabinet, to hear an account of his travels. But in the midst of his narrative, Nicholas interrupted him, saying, "I believe you are in possession of an admirable letter, written to you by my daughter Alexandra last year to Paris." The other took the letter out of his pocket-book. The father read it aloud himself to the mother, and both moistened it with their tears, and pressed it to their heart. When Nicholas gave back the letter he said, "I daily feel more and more how much we have lost." The letter was indicative of intellect and rare talent, and also displayed youthful gaiety of heart, childlike religious faith, and wonderful charm. She was not only a loss to her own family, but to the world at large. All

courts abound in pearls and diamonds, but such a treasure as the youthful Alexandra is more rare than the purest and largest-sized gems.

The Duke of Nassau erected a splendid monument to his deceased wife Elisabeth; a Greek chapel, that rises above the Nero valley, near Wiesbaden, and the sculptor Hopfgarten has immortalized her features in marble. But in retired Zarskoe-Selò also some reminiscences of the lovely Alexandra remain. The room in which she died is transformed into a Greek chapel, adorned with a sacred picture, representing her beautiful features. The hut is still to be seen in the garden where she used to feed the swans by the lake, but they were black ones, who gradually disappeared. Not far from this stands a marble statue to her memory; it is a piously intended work, but devoid of artistic value.

CHAPTER VII.

PALERMO.

After a whole year of tears and mourning, the health of the Empress was utterly exhausted, and the physicians strongly urged the Emperor to send her to some foreign waters—but to which, was a question difficult to answer. Her depression of spirits required to be as much considered as the disorder of her nerves. It is well known that just at that time travelling in foreign countries was a difficult matter for Russians, and what Nicholas forbade in his subjects, he usually did not permit in his own family. The physicians had for years observed that a summer journey to some baths lost all its good effect on the Empress's health by a sudden return to Petersburg in the trying months of autumn, and therefore entreated the Emperor to arrange to extend her absence to a year. To this proposal he at first positively refused his consent; to be deprived for a whole year of the precious moments of his family happiness, was to expect too much from him, especially as this summer the young Constantine was to undertake a longer journey, both by sea and land. His well-beloved Peterhof, in spite of the Cadet Camp, and

the manœuvres that occupied his time, without his wife would appear to him like a desert. Moreover, he did not like her remaining long in a foreign country, being so contrary to his own orders; besides, her stay in the Crimea was impossible, the Orianda Palace not being yet completed, and that lovely land was yet too backward in all the benefits of civilisation. The distance from Petersburg to the Crimea is not indeed so great as to Palermo, but full of difficulties and monotonous. The highways beyond Moscow were in a miserable condition; indeed Nicholas himself, in the spring of 1845, during a journey from Warsaw to Kiew, was obliged to proceed a considerable part of the way on foot, as the carriages stuck fast in the mud. Owing to these, and many other reasons, the Emperor was at last obliged to decide on a foreign country, but the physicians could not yet agree as to the place. When at length Palermo was named, he again drew back, for not only was the distance so great, but the journey led through so many countries and towns, and imposed many burdensome considerations. Mandt, who had first suggested this idea, contrived to follow it up successfully with Nicholas, who at last, with a gloomy brow, gave his consent, and his final words to the physician were, "You have compelled me to take this step, and therefore your conscience is answerable to me for the result."

The Emperor first visited the interior of Russia, and at the end of September quitted Tschuguief, in order to travel through Italy, a land as yet unknown to him, with his consort; a novel and charming, but too fugi-

tive acquaintance with such a land. This step was loudly censured in many circles, and Mandt on that account was the object of severe blame. The Berlin physicians also did not approve, and prophesied very little benefit. On Mandt all this made no impression, who conducted his illustrious charge in a glad spirit by Munich, the Brenner, Milan, Genoa, and Naples, to Palermo. And indeed even the very commencement of this enterprise was crowned with visible results; the invalid revived as soon as she left the Alps behind, and in Genoa her husband became reconciled to the imperious physician. The ever-harassed Czar himself was also in a very different mood, and his furrowed brow became smoother in Italian air; in Genoa he met one of his old state servants, the Marquis Paulucci, whom he received courteously, having been formerly Governor-General of the Baltic Provinces, and now of Genoa. On the $\frac{1}{2}\frac{0}{2}$ October they arrived in Palermo in the most charming weather, and the Emperor thanked Mandt for his medical advice. The journey was happily accomplished, and Nicholas obliged to confess that the sky here was brighter, and the air milder, than even in summer at Peterhof. October in particular, in the vicinity of the Neva, is under the 60th degree, while in the Gulf of Finland that month is unhealthy, cold, and damp; snow and fogs strive with each other for precedence, and all hurry from the country into the well-warmed town with its stoves; this month often passes without a single ray of sunshine. Palermo, 22 degrees farther south, and 19 degrees of longitude farther to the west, presents a very different aspect.

The wondrous formation of the mountains, the glowing colours in which country and city are steeped, the golden oranges that adorn whole plains, all captivated the Emperor, and he lamented being able only to remain here for so short a period. The Empress was well instructed about this country by her zealous studies on the subject, and yet even her expectations were surpassed. As she approached the shore, she saw from the vessel numbers of gaily dressed girls, offering for sale the loveliest roses and Southern flowers in profusion, and a procession of donkeys laden with oranges and melons; a lively Southern expression in every face, and in the background a chain of hills of the most singular forms; above all, however, Monte Pellegrino, which caused the Empress to utter a loud exclamation of delight. Her abode, however, was not in Palermo, but in the adjacent town of Olivuzza, about a quarter of an hour from the town. The road thither passes between garden walls, fountains, and various monuments of Arabian days. Avenues of evergreen trees, and the most enchanting peeps into the interior of the country, afford ample interest, especially as the road is not much frequented; though at every hour of the day muleteers are to be met with.

Olivuzza consists almost entirely of orange gardens, and stately houses, that stand empty in winter. Almost all these villas are built of marble, and are the property of great families in Palermo. Many indicate fallen greatness, while others are recent upstarts. The villa Butera had been prepared for the Empress, neither one of the handsomest nor the largest, but containing within

its walls many Northern comforts; for the Princess Butera was of Russian descent, *née* Princess Schachawskay. Months before the arrival of the Empress the house had been arranged, so that it could be heated during the winter—an unprecedented requirement for the Sicilians. The climate of Palermo and Sicily is somewhat like that of Rhodes and Madeira. Even during the winter months the thermometer seldom sinks below 9 degrees of Réaumur, and in the hottest summer does not rise beyond 24. Sudden transitions from heat to cold are here unheard of, and the greater part of the inhabitants only know the appliance of stoves by hearsay. , No little astonishment was caused by the whole of the Butera villa being provided with a heating apparatus before the arrival of the Empress, and indeed the Russian colony during the winter months, used more wood in Olivuzza than the whole of Palermo. The Northerner is less hardened than the Southerner, and the inhabitants of Petersburg, even in comparison with Germans, are delicate and almost effeminate. In 9 degrees of heat the Italian, both in the house and out of doors, is lightly clad, whereas in Petersburg almost every house is kept at 15 degrees.

The villa was only of sufficient size to contain the Empress and her daughter Olga, the other ladies and gentlemen of the suite were quartered in various neighbouring houses. Her dwelling was decorated within by the rarest flowers, and surrounded by a garden of tolerable size, and even in the winter months the flowers were in full bloom. No tree was

divested of its foliage, being all children of the South, and they seemed to the august lady of the North to be gifted with eternal spring. It was the realization of a dream that she had cherished for a lifetime. Her eyes rested for hours on Monte Pellegrino, on the dark green plains, on the glowing oranges, and she seemed to live in and by the air. As soon as twilight began to fall, and the physicians sent her to her room, she became more melancholy, and went within the four walls like a reluctant child. In the course of a few weeks she became so much stronger and fatter, that she could again wear a bracelet that had become too large for her arm in Petersburg. Those who saw her before her journey from the capital, and now in December met her again, could not but acknowledge that she looked ten years younger and stronger. The Emperor took advantage of his short stay to become acquainted with the environs of Palermo, attended by Prince Albert of Prussia, though the period for this purpose was brief; for the Chancellor, Count Nesselrode, as well as Count Orlof, were with him, and twice a week couriers from Petersburg brought despatches that required the Imperial signature. On his return journey he first paid a visit to the King of Naples, then spent five days of excited energy in Rome, wrote a long and admirable letter to his wife as to the impression made on him by the Everlasting City, and passed several days in Vienna, but owing to the political relations of that period, by no means in such a golden humour as in Sicily. By the beginning of January he was once more in Petersburg, where he was received by 20 degrees of

cold, which even his giant bodily frame could not withstand, after having enjoyed Sicily. The Empress passed days of enchantment at this time, so far as they could be so to her without the presence of her husband; for the King of the Two Sicilies, Ferdinand the Second, contributed by every means in his power to make the stay of his illustrious guest in his triangular island pleasing to her. He banished the legion of importunate and repulsive beggars out of the town and the environs; he placed part of his splendid stables at her disposal, and appointed several experienced policemen to watch over the safety of his august guest. He himself appeared from time to time, to ascertain with his own eyes that his care was such as really to deserve the gratitude she expressed.

The King, and also Queen Therèse, daughter of the Archduke Charles of Austria, were utterly different in their whole nature from the Empress, and rather checked than promoted innocent sociability in the island; for at the Neapolitan Court the strict ceremonial of former centuries still prevailed, in direct opposition to the inclinations of their guest. On both sides this was acutely felt, and each followed their own customs. There was nò lack, nevertheless, of visitors in Olivuzza. After the departure of the Emperor came Constantine with his suite, and a squadron of Russian ships; the naval officers being highly distinguished, and also a splendid military band that played every day in the garden of the Empress, as formerly in Zarskoe-Selò and Peterhof; moreover, the Crown Prince of Würtemberg arrived, the Princes Alexander and

George of Prussia, Prince Windischgrätz, and various chance travellers, who were invited to join the Imperial circle. But even without the visits of strangers, her daily society was very select, and contained all the elements that could beneficially influence the mind and the spirit.

Most closely of all related to the Empress was her younger sister, the widowed Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and her daughter, Princess Louise. The two sisters, since 1817, when Princess Charlotte quitted Prussia, had only met during visits to Berlin, and now enjoyed the happiness of being together, as in their childhood, many years ago. They both bore the same name of Alexandra, but the Empress was once more in their intimate family circle, to her sister and niece, sister and aunt *Charlotte*. Her sister was fresher and stronger in health than Alexandra, and possessed a calm, unimpassioned character, a profound German nature, a fund of benevolence betrayed by every movement of her lips, so that she became the chief resource of the Empress, and took a sisterly share in her joys and her sorrows. She lived with her daughter, Princess Louise, and a small Court suite, in the villa of Duke Serrodifalco, close beside her sister, to whom she came every morning early, and seldom left her till eleven o'clock at night. Princess Louise, two years younger than her cousin Olga, had been brought up quite on the system her aunt approved, devoid of all that stiff formality which German Princesses of petty Courts are usually compelled to observe; she had the natural cheerfulness of youth—frank, and with a certain

degree of enthusiasm for nature and art, and in a happy mood, owing to her journey. The daily society of her aunt and her retinue was as novel to her as the grand scale of nature in Sicily, and she eagerly sought information with regard to the history of the country and its rare vegetation, listened to every word spoken in society, and in their drives and walks gave way to the most ungovernable spirits.

Constantine returned from his Oriental journey to Palermo, and the august circle crowded round the young wanderer during the first days of his stay, who could not relate enough to his mother about Constantinople, Brussa, the Greek Islands, and Mount Athos. His narrations were made more interesting by an album, in which he had sketched with his own hand a number of historical places. In January he undertook a tour through the whole of Sicily, and viewed the scenes of ancient Greek story, to which in his youth he had devoted so much enthusiasm, and by his descriptions of Messina, Catania, Mount Etna, Syracuse, Malta, and Girgenti, furnished fresh topics of conversation in the evening circles, and awakened the most lively longing in the heart of his mother to see some portion of that island. Unhappily the doctors prohibited all further expeditions, even in the environs of Palermo; thus she was obliged to give up the idea of seeing in early morning the whole island entirely overshadowed by the gigantic Etna. This was not, however, the only anxiety that stole into the quiet period of her stay. Along with the above ladies, Olga, the second daughter of the Empress, was the whole day with her mother. This

Princess was at that time confessedly the most beautiful girl in Europe and in Sicily, as well as later in Italy, and she moved among all daily commonplace forms like an ideal Greek divinity. The people, as well as the artists, filled with a sense of beauty, stood gazing at her in astonishment wherever she appeared. To the Italians her stately figure and her fair hair, her mild blue eyes, and the shape of her features, caused her to be a double novelty; her gait was majestic, like that of a Juno, but the gentleness and charm of a Raphael-Madonna lit up her features when she spoke. Sicily and Italy were obliged to confess that the North far surpassed even the ideal conception of the South in this rare creature. Perhaps she was at that time more beautiful than ever, because in Palermo her heart had at length made its choice, and first love was impressed on her features. The Crown Prince of Würtemberg, during his short visit to Palermo, was betrothed to her, but before this event could be openly announced, they were obliged to wait for the assent of the Emperor and the King also, which arrived on the same day, and under rather singular circumstances for the fair Olga. The Imperial Court were in February invited to a church, to witness the ceremony of a young Princess being clothed as a nun. The Empress avoided exposing herself to any mental agitation, but the rest of her family, with their suites, attended this very affecting spectacle. At the precise moment when the symbolical interment of the nun took place, a letter was put into the hands of Olga, who recognised her father's writing, sending his blessing to this young bride, at the very

same moment when the other was renouncing the world for ever. In natural and eager expectation of her bridegroom's return, she passed this Italian Sicilian spring, herself its fairest flower, though she knew it not.

In the suite, Baron Peter Meyendorf was most prized by the society. He was at that time Russian Ambassador in Berlin, met the travellers in Italy, and was intrusted by Nicholas with the escort of his consort. He was a man of high cultivation, both of intellect and heart, and peculiarly suited to the Empress. He had exchanged his original military career for that of diplomacy, for which his varied knowledge and the cleverness of his conversation and his pen peculiarly fitted him. Almost all modern languages were familiar to him, and he was also versed in the ancient classics, history and mathematics; the fine arts and literature equally claimed his interest; in his *salon* in Berlin were to be met the heads of science, and of the University, as well as artists in song and painting, and the most experienced statesmen of Europe. His family was one of the oldest in the Baltic Provinces and Germany; and Pope Clement the Second sprung from it. His nature was unpretending and upright, without either pride or servility, courteous towards every one, and universally esteemed in Berlin, both at Court and in the University.

His position had hitherto estranged him from intimacy with the Court; his name was well known to the Empress, though his rare qualities had not yet come under her observation. But her very first conversation with him showed her that she had not yet met his

equal; and thus he remained at her little Court during her stay in Sicily, and in Italy, till her return to Petersburg.

The most difficult mission for the journey, and for the visit to Italy and Sicily, devolved on Count Schuwalof. As Grand Chamberlain, he had not only to make arrangements for the Court, but also for the suite, but this intricate affair was in the best hands when confided to his guidance. The Schuwalof family was first distinguished during the reign of Peter the Great, and its various branches were renowned under the Empress Elisabeth, and since then became one of the most conspicuous families in Petersburg. The High Chamberlain had been educated abroad, and was well versed in foreign languages. He was amiable, courteous, and obliging to every one. Count Apraxin, Adjutant-General to the Emperor, escorted the Empress on all her journeys. This family, since the time of Peter the Great, filled many State offices. The High Admiral of the Russian fleet, in Peter's day, was Feodor Apraxin; Stephen, in the Seven Years' War, won the battle of Grossjägerndorf. The Apraxin to whom we allude was a quiet, unassuming man, devoted body and soul to the Imperial family, but of no great importance. The two physicians, Mandt and Markus, lived, not in Olivuzza, but in Palermo, some versts from the Imperial villa. Both Russian and foreign papers cried out loudly at the time against the enormous retinue of Alexandra, and yet there were few, save those whom we have named. The Marshal's table, at which the suite of the Empress, and the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg,

and that of Constantine, daily met, consisted of scarcely twenty persons.

An Empress of Russia could not be without a lady-in-waiting, and this post was occupied by Princess Soltikof. This family also is one of the most glorious in Russia, and, like that of Narischkin, connected with the Imperial family, for Pauline Soltikof married the Czar Iwan, brother of Peter the Great, and thus became the mother of Empress Anna Iwanowna. This Princess (*née* Dolgorucky) had much simplicity of manner, and her conversation more sympathetic than lively; but she knew the duties of her position, without interfering with those of others; with all her good qualities of head and heart, she was not so intimate with the Empress as her rank entitled her to be, as she required more interesting and amusing conversation. Countess K. Tiesenhausen, the friend of Alexandra for years past, was at the head of the female congress, and more so than ever in Italy, being most intimately acquainted with that country. The other Court lady was Barbara Nelidof, at that time esteemed a great beauty at Court. She had much dignity and grace, her features were refined, her complexion pale, but her large black eyes and beautifully-formed mouth imparted to her whole aspect a peculiar charm. She spoke little, but observed the more, was guarded in conversation, never laying herself open to criticism. Her interest quickly heightened into ardent enthusiasm. Occasionally deep-seated melancholy was visible in her countenance, lending a new charm to her lovely features. She lived in Palermo in a more retired manner than any of the suite. The

lovely Olga's companion was an elderly lady, Mdlle. Akulof, who was devoted to her young mistress.

In the suite of Constantine was Admiral Lütke, who was, as the reader already knows, a most distinguished man, although the Russian squadron could number many superior men among its officers. Adding the whole domestic household to those we have mentioned, the Imperial Court did not consist of more than forty, a very moderate number for an Empress of Russia.

A great part of the suite were far from being so happy as the Empress in Sicily, having exchanged the greatest and most brilliant Court in the world for a state of seclusion, to which they were quite unaccustomed; the lovely scenery around was quite indifferent to many; their occupations and their position were different from what they had been in the Winter Palace; they missed their acquaintances and society, and in the midst of Alexandra's felicity, they complained to her of *ennui*. Count Schuwalof alone formed an exception, being here as much occupied as in Petersburg. The others wished for amusements to fill up their time, and at last the thought suggested itself to perform little comedies. The Empress gladly gave her consent, but Mandt prohibited this scheme with dictatorial sternness, fearing any excitement for the invalid. He expected as much benefit from a strict secluded mode of life for his patient as from the mild climate; he did not even approve of the King occasionally paying a visit to Olivuzza. The Empress was quite reconciled to the monotony of her existence, and daily felt stronger. In winter she rose at eight o'clock, spent only a very short time at

her toilette, and appeared in the little garden of her villa, afterwards breakfasting in the open air. Here she only received her relations and her children. The weather was so favourable that, during the months she passed here, she was rarely obliged to breakfast in the house, and she was most kind in allowing the members of her suite to have their Petersburg morning sleep. In the course of an hour she retired to her cabinet, to attend to her correspondence. Then her family and Baron Meyendorf came to tell her the most important political news, and thus saved her the time and trouble of reading the newspapers. The intervening hours till luncheon were entirely occupied by serious conversation. Even before the arrival of Constantine, she eagerly studied the history of Sicily and Italy; the animated descriptions her son had given of the East excited in her the wish to become acquainted with Italy, especially Rome, with all its remarkable objects. She caused works on Rome to be regularly read aloud to her, so that when she visited the everlasting city she should not be a prey to wearisome *ciceroni*. These morning occupations were only shared by a select circle. In the afternoon the whole of the Russians in Olivuzza assembled in her garden; a military band played their best pieces; and in Bellini's fatherland, German and Russian melodies resounded, and popular Sicilian melodies. Usually some expedition was arranged, which, unluckily for the Empress, was confined to the immediate environs. But she was enchanted to be able to drive in the open air, and to find herself surrounded by glowing hills, and dark green, in a month which she

usually, in Petersburg, passed in her room. After a drive of this sort, she rested for an hour before dinner, which was served in strict accordance with the orders of the physicians, and to which she invited very few guests. In the evening the small circle remained together for about two hours, and by eleven o'clock every one retired to rest. As five months were spent in this monotony, it might be thought that towards the end of that period Alexandra must have found the days tedious, whereas she looked forward to their close with great regret. Everything that could recall etiquette was banished. All the gentlemen walked about in frock coats, except at the Marshal's table, where ladies and gentlemen dined together. The hours absorbed in the Winter Palace by the frequent changes of toilette were here devoted to repose and pleasant occupation; in this new land and life, her diary even demanded more time than in Petersburg, as she carefully inscribed in it every experience and every novelty, in order to be able in after years to recall particular days of the past. Her suite made use of their liberty to frequent the theatre and the society of Palermo, who did all in their power to make Southern life appear rose-coloured to their Northern guests.

The winter season was opened with a fancy ball; twenty of the handsomest young ladies in Palermo were selected, and appeared in Sicilian costume—saffron yellow dresses, white aprons, striped stockings, coral necklaces and bracelets, and natural crimson roses decorating their raven hair, when they danced the tarantella with castanets, and with the grace and ease of gazelles. But all

Europe was to be represented at the ball, so waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and *écossaises* followed, performed by twenty Cossack and Sicilian couples, and when at length these dramatic representations were over, the public joined in the ball, and danced the whole night. Soon after many families in Palermo invited the Russian circle to their houses, for, in spite of much decayed grandeur and faded names, some families still entertained splendidly; among the former were the Monteleones, descendants of Fernando Cortez. Their palace is in the middle of Palermo, and the hall in which the guests were received was adorned with a bronze bust of Fernando Cortez. This palace, by its singular arrangements, transports the guests back to the sixteenth century; the family still possess large territories in Mexico. If this great name is distinguished by historical reminiscences, that of the Duke Risa di Calobria surpasses all the rest by its wealth. The hall of his marble palace can contain more than eight hundred persons, and amazes strangers by the splendour of the walls and the floors, all ornamented and inlaid with Sicilian precious stones. The magnificence of the house is thoroughly carried out in their mode of entertaining, which satisfies even the most fastidious demands. The young Duchess was the greatest ornament of the house, a charming Florentine, fascinating in appearance, lively in conversation, and in her overflowing happiness knowing only *one* sorrow—to have been married nine years without children.

As the Empress was obliged to forego these fêtes, thus frustrating all the hopes of the inhabitants of Palermo

to receive her, a formal deputation was sent by the city to beg her at least to make her appearance among them on one Sunday during the Carnival. The inexorably severe physician allowed himself to be softened for once, and heaven sent a spring day, such as a northern poet's fancy in the north could not picture. The fragrant breath of flowers pervaded the town and its environs, and the azure sky was mirrored in the calm of the bright blue sea. The impatience to see the Empress was as great in Palermo as that in the hearts of the Northern guests to witness the gay festivities of the South. The two principal streets in Palermo, Toledo and Maqueda, which cross at right angles, were the scene of the Carnival, their four corners being adorned by four splendid palaces, these streets being not only crowded with human beings but also with actual depots and stores of flowers, especially violets, with which they sought to surprise the illustrious visitor. The balconies in Palermo are wide, and as long as the façade of the whole building, each storey of every house having a balcony. All these were thronged in both streets, as if an attack or a storm were anticipated, but the sole weapons were flowers, and especially nosegays of violets, for it was strictly enjoined on the public not to throw bonbons at the Empress. At the stroke of three o'clock, the crowd began to move like a surging sea; Alexandra, with her sister, daughter, and niece, in state-carriages and four, drove slowly from Olivuzza towards the crowd; Constantine, with his friends, was in a simple calèche, followed by some carriages laden with flowers and bonbons. The Em-

press was stunned by the cheers, and her carriage had not yet reached the middle of the town when a pile of flowers was heaped up before her, and the strong odour of the violets seemed to overpower her. She stopped for a few minutes before the palace of Duke Serrodifalco to look down both streets, and she then seated herself in the balcony of this palace, prepared for her reception. In a short time, the whole balcony was piled up with flowers, and the fragrance was again too overpowering for her weak nerves. Like the Indian shepherd who wished for a rivulet, when suddenly he found the valley inundated, and was obliged to seek refuge with his flocks on the hills, Alexandra was compelled to go an *étage* higher, in order to be a less good aim for those beneath, and that she might herself fling flowers and sweetmeats among the crowd. The crush round the house was terrific, for noblemen and peasants, ladies and gentlemen, were contending with each other for every flower and bonbon that she flung down. But all eyes suddenly turned towards a new spectacle. A ship, furnished with a mast and sails, was moving slowly along the street on eight wheels, drawn by sixteen horses. Eight gaily clad sailors and a captain were standing on it, who had been selected from the first and richest families in Palermo, and stopped under the window of the Empress. After the ship, in the course of ten or twelve minutes, had fired off its supply of sweetmeats, a chest was opened on deck, and out of this arose a mountain of the loveliest flowers that the island could produce at that season—the middle of February. Besides roses and violets

were to be seen the earliest almond and orange blossoms, myrtles and laurels. All were launched with much precision at the balcony where the Empress was standing, and many of them decorated her cabinet on the ensuing day. But she was again made dizzy by the strong scents of the flowers, and by the turmoil, and was obliged to retire for a time, in order to gain fresh strength. Now came a second ship, provided in the same manner as the former, now slowly moving away. The first had filled the street with the most charming odours of flowers, but the second caused still greater surprise, for as a heap of violets and roses rose in the air, the strains of the Russian National Hymn arose also, and no one could guess who the disguised minstrels were, who sang the northern words with so pure an accent. The officers of the Russian squadron had prepared this surprise for their Empress, conferring on themselves the pleasure of celebrating the Carnival for once among flowers instead of snow and ice. One surprise succeeded another, but the invalid was obliged to deny herself the pleasure of seeing anything further, as the day was drawing to a close, and with it her strength also.

But this day was always recalled by her as a memorable one in her life, seeming, for a couple of hours, to have brought back the freshness of youth and childhood, and realized her most fantastic dreams. She had seen the unrestrained mirth and joy of a whole town, nay, a whole country, and passed a spring day that had piled at her feet the fairest flowers, her favourites; she had been gay, indeed happy, along with thousands.

Palermo proved that its princely palaces were in no degree inferior to those of the North either in inner splendour or in kind hospitality, and that the public life of its people was blessed with an everlasting spring, and a deep blue glad sky. And yet the actual Sicilian people are quite as poor as the Russians, but both rich and poor forget their troubles far more easily in the South than in the North, where to maintain life itself is an everyday conflict, and where even joy bears a frosty aspect. In Petersburg, the Empress was accustomed after gay fêtes to visit the institutions, hospitals, and alms-houses under her care, in order to bring consolation, help, and hope by her presence to places on which the fête-givers of the Court and city never lavished their wealth. This was not possible in Palermo; but on the following day, besides the 10,000 francs she had already distributed among the poor, she sent an additional 10,000, to enable the gay mood of the people to continue merrily the whole week.

With this fête her quiet stay in Olivuzza came to an end; four months since her arrival had vanished like a dream, like a vision, while she herself resembled a fresh blooming plant, and might with truth say that she had really *lived* during those four months, and enjoyed existence. The physicians now eagerly discussed how long she ought to remain. The original plan was that she should go to Rome with her son Constantine, to visit for three weeks, with this enthusiast, all the treasures of the Eternal city, and to spend the same time in Naples. The happy island of Sicily knows no winter, like Florence and Rome; no storms like Naples, but only

perpetual spring, diversified by passing showers. After Palermo, Naples appears almost inclement, especially in March, just as Munich or Vienna do after Milan or Venice. Rome seemed to form the best transition from Palermo after Naples. But this plan was not carried out. Constantine with his suite set off in a few days alone for Rome, and the little circle of his mother became still more circumscribed; for with the departure of Constantine her calm easy mood was at an end; she felt anything but attracted to the North, and sorrowful feelings stole over her heart when she walked alone in the garden, and gazed at the splendid magnolias and palms, the ornaments of her abode. Her eyes often rested on these trees, the silent friends and witnesses of her rural happiness, and she cherished a wish to transport some orange trees from Olivuzza to Petersburg, as living *souvenirs* of the time she had passed in Palermo, and this wish was fulfilled. After the departure of her son, she was allowed to stay a couple of weeks longer at Olivuzza, and then the visit to Naples was at once to take place. The suite rejoiced after their life in Olivuzza, at the thoughts of a large bustling city, brilliant courts, and still more brilliant fêtes, declaring beforehand that the environs were more picturesque, and the climate better than that of Palermo, whereas Alexandra longed for Rome, and would gladly have avoided the life of tumult and excitement that she would infallibly find again by the Neva. During the last days of her stay she undertook some excursions into the town, where she saw the old Norman Palace, the cradle of Frederick the Second, of Hohen-

staufen, and also the tomb of that Prince, in the magnificent dome; she traversed the city in every direction, bade farewell to all the separate spots where she had so loved to linger, and in the first weeks of March set off for ancient Parthenope.

The Royal Family vacated the first *étage* of the palace for their guest, and contented themselves with the second, for the visit was only to last a week or two, as three weeks at least were to be passed in Rome. The Empress and her daughter Olga selected the wing of the palace that commands a view of the bright gulf and of Mount Vesuvius; they could not only walk on the long spacious balcony, but even be drawn about in a little carriage. The noise of the shouting lazzaroni was less than on the other side that looks on the square, where the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg lived. The Serai in Constantinople, and also the hotel of the Russian Embassy there, offer a still greater variety in the prospect, but both are unique in European capitals, and even the oft-praised Lisbon cannot stand a comparison with her two rivals. The King had done all in his power to make the stay of his august guests as agreeable as in Palermo; indeed the adjacent Vesuvius seemed courtly, for, during the stay of the Empress, it spouted forth daily and nightly the most brilliant fireworks. Shortly after her arrival, she was joined by Constantine from Rome, and somewhat later by Duke William of Mecklenburg, son of the Grand Duchess. The family circle was therefore reinforced, but Palermo, with its repose and delights, was lost to Alexandra, and indeed for ever. She neither felt so

well nor so happy as she had hoped; all the novel splendours offered to her by the Court were only to her a foretaste of Petersburg. She drove through the noisy Toledo street; she walked through the Chiaja on a day when spring buds were sprouting vigorously from the trees; she gazed for hours in astonishment, from her balcony, on the novel spectacle of Vesuvius, but nothing availed in restoring the happy mood of Olivuzza.

After having thoroughly enjoyed the aspect of the city, her first wish was to see Pompeii. The King would not deny himself the honour and pleasure of accompanying his illustrious guest thither, and conducting her through his territories of the ancients, and thus the two Courts, amounting to a hundred persons, arrived in this dead city. The Empress, with her son Constantine and her daughter Olga by her side, was charmed with the ruins, wandered through the streets on foot in delight, rested in some of the dwellings, such as the house of Sallust, desiring that the arrangements of the private dwellings and the theatre should be explained to her, and seemed to have forgotten her longing for Palermo. She had sufficient strength to work at her diary the same evening for two hours; indeed she promised to accompany the whole society next day to the foot of Vesuvius, and to attend a royal ball some days later. But next morning brought the news that she was unwell, the second day the tidings that she was ill, and on the third it was said plainly and openly that her life was hanging by a thread.

The alarm and solicitude of the Royal Family and of the suite were equally great, and daily increased, as even her daughter and sister were not allowed to see the invalid, and the physicians, who were rarely visible, spoke mysteriously of danger to her life. But the physicians were not unjustly reproached with having chosen the month of March for a visit to Naples. Scorching heat, alternated with gusts of rain and a stormy sea, and the Empress could not be guarded against little imprudences in her dress, and even in her diet. The expedition to Pompeii was at last pronounced to be the ground of the evil, and it was thought unpardonable in the despotic Mandt to have sanctioned it, after having frustrated, by his peremptory decree, much less hurtful excursions in Palermo. The Royal Court, as well as the relatives of the sufferer, were in the same dilemma, being obliged to give up all further excursions for the present; indeed they scarcely ventured to leave the palace, although no one had access to the patient. Thus ten or twelve melancholy days passed in fair Naples in the greatest suspense and alarm. At length Constantine, just before his departure, resolved to make the ascent of Vesuvius, with a large party. It was also indispensable to inform the convalescent Alexandra that her son could no longer defer his journey, so she only saw him, after a separation of fourteen days, to bid him farewell, and to give him her blessing, before his departure for France and Algiers.

One annoyance succeeded another; she could not endure to see Rome without her son, and now illness

deprived her of his society in Naples. He was himself very depressed on taking leave of his mother, who was at length permitted to see different individuals for a quarter of an hour at a time. Sister, daughter, and niece were admitted to her singly; they thought her very weak, but not in a hopeless condition. The twelve days of her illness seemed to herself like an evil dream, of which she retained only one reminiscence. During the first night, the regular loud striking of a clock in the room disturbed her rest; she removed the noisy bell, but during her whole illness she was haunted by a spectral stroke of the hammer without any bell. She could scarcely be persuaded that two weeks had elapsed, more oppressive to those around her than to the unconscious patient herself. The leave-taking of her son alone continued a vivid but painful reality in her memory. A few days afterwards, she was permitted to have one or two persons to sit with her in the evening, but they were enjoined to allow the invalid to speak as little as possible, and to avoid all exciting topics in conversation. At the time of her arrival the Royal Court appointed a Marshal's table, to which, in addition to the Imperial suite, some of the most distinguished persons in Naples were daily invited. Thirty-six in number, and a footman in royal livery waiting on every two guests, and besides this a Royal Court official was commissioned to receive the company, and to conduct them to their seats. The rich and tasteful liveries of these lackeys, their courtesy and politeness, the skilful way in which they attended on the guests, even surprised Nicholas himself; recalling,

indeed, to many, the Bourbon Court of the previous century.

King Ferdinand the Second, at that time thirty-six years of age, corpulent and burly in figure, had nothing in his features indicative of his Bourbon descent. His appearance, especially in a frock-coat, was that of a homely citizen, and anything but stately or imposing. Good-nature, sensuality, and piety strove for predominance in his features. He was sparing of his words, especially in the presence of the Empress, and seemed himself conscious that intercourse with him alone could not suffice to satisfy this highly gifted lady of the North. Queen Teresa, daughter of the Archduke Charles, although, like Alexandra herself, of German extraction, was even less congenial to her than the King. Her whole life seemed to be absorbed by the Church and the Court. Both, therefore, preferred only meeting in a large assemblage, and even then the royal couple took very little share in the conversation. The King, therefore, in those excursions undertaken without the Empress, was cheerful and sociable, taking pleasure in conversing with the Russian suite about the North, distributing cigars to all around, and seeming well amused. The idea distressed him of his distinguished guest leaving his capital without having become acquainted with the paradise around; so his joy was boundless on being told that, in a few days, she was to enjoy the open air beyond the palace; for latterly she had been sunning herself in the beautiful balcony, and among the blooming orange-trees, drawn up and down in a rolling-chair. This joyful intelligence seemed to

revive the whole society, and various expeditions were now arranged, that no foreigner should leave Naples and its enchanting environs without having performed. The Russian Ambassador at the Royal Court, Count Potocki, was usually at the head of these excursions. The post of Ambassador at Naples seemed to many the most charming and enjoyable in the world, especially when summoned thither from the far North—from Petersburg or Stockholm. Neapolitan affairs are not very burdensome, and a worldly-wise distinguished courtier being the most important point, and a person of this description not particularly ambitious of seeing his diplomatic name weekly in a European journal, must feel himself truly happy in Naples as Ambassador; and such was the case with Count Potocki, so long as the presence of his sovereign did not ruffle his tranquillity. His Polish descent was proclaimed by a proud feeling of independence, by refined manners, and versatile conversation; while the ambitious Russian in office, under present circumstances, became less prominent. His position in the State could at most offer him new connections, but no other advantages or pleasures. The post of Neapolitan Ambassador was in accordance with most of his tastes, and with the Catholic faith he professed, and his love of art and nature; for the business he had to transact did not absorb much time. The presence of the Empress, however, burdened him with a number of small services, rendering attention necessary to various persons whom previously he had scarcely remarked, far less entertained. It was especially novel and a change to

him to find many of his projects sanctioned or declined through Dr. Mandt; or, what irritated him still more, in addition to this dictator, to be forced to depend on the advice of other authorities. No one, therefore, now saw this usually agreeable courtier in his true light.

Countess Nesselrode was also living in Naples at that time, the wife of the Chancellor,—a lady who, during her whole life, rather shunned than sought the Court. Until the Empress was able to leave the city, the King undertook some expeditions with her suite, and with his own Court, to the Blue Grotto and to Amalfi. It was his wish that on the steamer all rank and etiquette should be banished; and of this he himself gave the example. Scarcely had he set foot on the vessel when he collected all those who smoked, seated himself with them on the fore part of the steamer, pointing out during the sail the most remarkable objects in the environs, listening with the rest of the guests to Russian and German songs, and going first into the Blue Grotto, the entrance to which is so confined that you must stretch yourself out horizontally in the boat. On the next excursion to Amalfi, dinner was served on deck, and the King was the soul of the conversation. Some days afterwards, he conducted the party to Caserta and other places, and was always in the most cheerful mood.

Before the Empress could venture to leave the palace she met with a disappointment that for years she never ceased regretting. She had been dangerously ill in Naples, and, when fully recovered, only a few days remained for the enjoyment of nature; for already it

was the sixth week of Catholic Lent, which on this year fell eight days earlier than that of the Greek Church. The convalescent Empress in this way passed two quiet weeks near the Gulf of Naples. Fate, therefore, deprived her of the splendours of Naples; and now her wishes and aspirations were all turned towards Rome, for which she had been preparing for months past. Then the question arose as to whether she ought to venture to Rome or not. First of all, it was said that the land journey was very fatiguing, and beyond her powers. That a further journey required great caution, was as certain as that the physicians must first carefully measure and study her strength. She replied that she could take short expeditions daily without being wearied, and that she preferred the most fatiguing land journey to a sea voyage, of which she always had a horror. Then it was said Rome in April was as unhealthy as Naples in March. Alexandra replied that she could not arrive there till the middle of April, and was quite willing to limit her stay to a few days. She was allowed for a short time to persevere in this intention, when suddenly news arrived that epidemic measles were prevalent in Rome. This intelligence alarmed her daughter Olga more than the Empress; but she insisted on certain confirmation of the fact. An express was therefore sent off to Rome without the knowledge of the two august ladies, who returned with sure information that measles prevailed there. The daughter was quite ready to expose herself to this danger to please her mother, or wholly to give up

going there, if the latter could only accomplish her ardent desire. No one had the courage to carry this report to Alexandra,—not from dread of her anger, for her temper was angelic, and in far worse cases she never lost her equanimity, but in case it should cause her a relapse. The Grand Duchess Olga placed no great confidence in the sayings and officious interference of the physicians of the suite; and in the reports about measles she only saw a pretext to prevent her mother going to Rome, as many persons in the suite would find a residence there more tiresome than even in Palermo and Naples. She imparted her view of the case to her mother, who declared that even if danger really existed, she was resolved on viewing Rome from a distant hill, and driving from the Coliseum, past St. Peter's, in order, at least, like Moses and the Promised Land, to have seen the Eternal City. Some days passed in perplexing silence; for Dr. Mandt treated the subject more seriously than ever, and at last prohibited the Russian suite from having any communication with Rome, and even persons who came from that city were enjoined strictly to avoid the palace and the suite.

The Empress and her daughter were only encouraged in their plan by Baron Meyendorf and a few more; and when Mandt heard this, he declared bluntly that if these gentlemen did not respect his orders he would instantly resign his office of physician and devolve all responsibility on them. Thus all further resistance became impossible, and Mandt sent his ultimatum through the Grand Duchess Olga.

Although all were now compelled to submit to his

will, still the Grand Duchêss of Mecklenburg was in no degree bound to do so, so she determined, with the consent of her sister, to go to Rome with only her daughter and her suite. Mandt was enraged to find a person who could act independently of his despotic will, so, not being able under any pretext to frustrate her journey to Rome, he at all events forbade her to return thence to Naples. As she intended to remain quietly in Rome for a fortnight, she could not have at all events cherished any hope of seeing her sister again in Naples. Mandt made no allusion to their meeting in Florence, which was a great oversight, showing more obstinacy than real precaution. The Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg set off with her son and daughter and her suite, and the Empress found herself solitary and forsaken in fair Naples. The thought of not seeing Rome destroyed all pleasure even in the last days before Passion Week, the only space left for her enjoyment of nature; for she wished to remain quietly in the palace during the Catholic Passion Week, and the succeeding Russian one of course prohibited all worldly amusements. One day she said, sighing—

"I believe the saying will be fulfilled in me, 'See Naples and then die.'"

But a person present rejoined quickly, "Another proverb says, 'See Naples, but live in Petersburg.'"

"That reminds me," replied she, "that I have not even once seen Naples in its picturesque garb; what projects have you all for this lovely spring day?"

"An excursion to Castellamare," was the answer.

"Am I even to be forbidden to breathe the air of

spring in Naples?" said she good-humouredly. "It is my wish to participate in this pleasure with the rest of the society."

No one ventured to encourage this idea without Mandt's assent, which was, however, shortly given, and for the first time since her illness she was now to inhale fresh air beyond the bounds of the city. The entire circle consisted only of ten persons, and the King sent a police officer to the inhabitants of Castellamare to announce to them that he would remit the taxes of the town for a whole year, if her Imperial Majesty was not molested by bold importunate beggars. The Empress fell asleep in the railway carriage, and her calm features seemed invigorated. She felt strengthened, and drove up the hill to the Villa Lieven in a cheerful mood. From here is best seen this queen of all European cities rising like an amphitheatre. The air and the blue sea were still; the day rivalled that of the Carnival in Palermo; here also a refreshing slumber surprised her. When her daughter saw this she mounted a white donkey, and invited one-half of the company to take a ride with her in the woods. It was a cheerful spring day, and to the daughter of the mighty Czar a happy event to be in a southern wood, surrounded by gay companions, instead of formal courtiers; it was a delight to her to pluck May flowers with her own hand, and in the grandeur and majesty of nature to forget Imperial dignity, and to enjoy the happiness of existence, and inhale the fragrant flowery breezes of the south. She made such a pretty picture too on her humble snow-white steed, a spirit of gaiety lighting up

her features, divested of the burden so inseparable from a high position. After a short sleep the mother too enjoyed the scene on the Gulf of Naples, and, isolated from the society, she sat long alone absorbed in thought and contemplation; while envied as an Empress by millions, she in turn esteemed hundreds of thousands blessed to whom a happy fate had allotted such a home. After her severe illness she recalled the description of a spring morning in "Titan," and, grateful for every blissful moment, she raised her eyes in thankfulness to Heaven for having vouchsafed her such a day.

The Catholic Passion Week now began, the Marshal's table was given up, and all society at an end in the palace, so that the presence of the Empress should cause no disturbance to others; she only saw one or two persons in the evenings. On Maundy Thursday she and her little Court attended divine service in the Palace Church, where the King had erected a tribune. The church was hung with black, and lighted by torches, and the Royal Family and priesthood moved on their knees to the altar. The scene was striking, indeed affecting, but neither the members of the Greek Church nor the Protestants could understand these touching ceremonies, being accompanied by thoroughly secular music, taken from one of the newest Italian operas. It was difficult to resist the idea that such music was a mockery of the ceremonies; at their close in the hall of the palace ensued the feet-washing of the poor by the King himself. From the twelve districts of the town of Naples twelve very poor families were chosen, clothed in new blue linen dresses, with wigs on

their heads, conducted by some priests of lower degree into the palace. After having been placed there, the King appeared with some of his chamberlains, who removed the shoes and stockings of the poor men, and held their feet so long as their royal master was washing them. From thence the King led them into another room, where there was a well-furnished table, the guests being served by the Royal Princes. Many dishes were carried to the table, but few consumed, the rest being conveyed to the houses of the poor to form a family festival, for which purpose the King added thirty Neapolitan ducats for each family. After this grave ceremony, until the first Easter festival, no carriage must drive through this usually noisy city, and death-like silence suddenly prevails in lively stirring Naples; instead of carriages, invalids are carried about in sedan chairs, as in Dresden. At four o'clock in the afternoon the Royal Family go on foot to visit six or eight different churches, all dark on this day, displaying in the background, on transparent linen, the sufferings of Christ. Notwithstanding the stillness in the square of the palace and the Toledo Street, more than a hundred thousand people assemble, wandering up and down and visiting the churches. Regiments, in small divisions of thirty, loiter about, but without any weapons, and the sentinels reverse their arms. This particular Thursday therefore is a kind of quiet church promenade, and better entitled to the appellation of "Green Thursday" than in the North, where nature appears still colourless—if not, indeed, covered with snow.

When on the ensuing Sunday the sacred week of the Greek Church began for the Empress, the old life of excitement recommenced in the streets of Naples, which even the King, with all his consideration for his guest, could not prevent; but the fêtes in the palace, which take place during this week, he transferred to another period. It affected him very painfully that the priests would not allow the invalid Empress to arrange a Greek chapel in the Royal Palace; she was obliged daily to proceed from the palace to the hotel of the Russian Embassy, where the chapel was on the third *étage*. During her drives there the lazzaroni welcomed her with boisterous cries of delight; from early morning, bagpipes, flutes, and singers, with scarcely rags to cover them, amused the populace with opera airs and dancing and capering about, happier than the Empress herself when the stranger threw them a silver coin; passing soldiers stood still to listen, and even the police paused, to look on with a cheerful mien. This week, though as trying for Alexandra as in Petersburg, passed happily without any bad effects on her health. On Easter night she adopted a rich festive toilette, and after five melancholy weeks' rejoicing once more to be seen as an Empress, and yet during the ceremony the overpowering heat repeatedly caused her nearly to faint.

The Russian Easter Day was not so favoured by heaven as the Italian one of the previous week: the rain poured down in torrents, and it seemed as if the Imperial lady were to carry away with her a disagreeable impression of Naples. A grand reception however took place in the palace; the Russian countrymen of the

Empress came by hundreds to kiss her hands; indeed Prince Wolkonsky, seventy years of age, arrived in full uniform. After such fatigues she passed the rest of the day in the utmost repose; for she had only one more day to spend in Naples, her departure being irrevocably fixed, and under no circumstances was she to approach Rome. But the sky, on the second Russian Easter Day, cleared up in full splendour, so the Imperial and Royal Family, with a large retinue, went to Sorrento. It was the second lovely spring day, and alas! the last that the Empress passed beside the Gulf of Naples; she declared on reaching Sorrento that on this occasion even her expectations were exceeded. The King had ordered a repast to be prepared in an inn by the sea, and devoted himself to his fair guest with the most chivalrous courtesy. Her admiration of his beautiful land was his pride and his delight; he thought he could read in her words not only a recognition of its attractions, but that she placed it, as he wished, beyond Palermo. On Tuesday, April 20, the journey began. At nine o'clock in the morning, the Empress, in travelling costume, appeared among the Royal Family, to their surprise, to bid them farewell. On parting from the King, she asked him to grant leave of absence to the Duke Serrodifalco, who was very desirous to see Petersburg. The whole family, and likewise the Court in full dress, escorted the illustrious guest to the steamer "Kamtschatka." 30,000 troops were present, and the whole shore seemed paved with heads; they arrived amid a thunder of cannon, and the strains of the Russian National Hymn. The surface of the gulf was

covered by boats, from which curious eyes were once more directed towards the Empress. The leave-taking did not last long, for in ten minutes more the "Kamtschatka" was in motion, followed by loud cheers.

Thus the Empress passed six months in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies; her health seemed now on a surer footing, and one of her most cherished wishes was fulfilled: she had seen Sicily, and the greater part of Italy. What circumstances seemed to have rendered impossible even to the mighty Czar, an evil destiny, sickness had realized; a visit for pleasure alone, such as every Englishman enjoys, was prohibited to the Empress of Russia, and yet it became possible after all. Yet again she was disappointed in seeing Rome, the crown of a visit to Italy, so that her feelings were rather those of regret than of gladness. A large portion of her suite, in spite of Dictator Mandt's veto, had gone to Rome, Baron Meyendorf and the private secretary, Herr von Chambeau, and others. The whole of the party came to meet the Empress on the same day in Florence, and no one could venture to enforce a quarantine on the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg before she again joined her sister. The huge steamer had very few people on board, and, in spite of the fine weather, those few were not in a very gay mood. By far the greater portion of the suite and the servants were in the second steamer, the "Bessarabia," and Mandt preferred confiding his august charge to the care of his colleague, Markus, taking rest himself in the second steamer. There was wisdom in this precaution, for Alexandra would have been too vividly reminded by his

presence of her lost paradise; a separation between the invalid and her physician was very beneficial just at this time.

Her eyes remained long fixed on Naples; and when the smoking Vesuvius disappeared, she openly gave vent to her thoughts by saying, "I am forbidden the land journey to Rome, because it is more fatiguing than a sea voyage, without remembering that from my youth upwards I always hated the sea, and am accustomed to long journeys by land in Russia. A stay of a couple of days in Rome is supposed to be too trying, and yet I am permitted to stay two whole weeks in Florence without either over fatigue or any strain on my strength being dreaded. My chagrin not to have seen Rome will long gnaw at my heart; indeed, it will probably destroy all the good results of my journey."

When she arrived in the vicinity of Gaeta she not only felt weary but positively ill, as a very slight motion of the vessel sufficed to cause her sea sickness. Before lying down she begged to be awakened when the cross of St. Peter's was visible from the ship. Before reaching the spot she was prostrated by severe sea sickness, and almost all her ladies were equally ill, so the day passed without the satisfaction that a healthy person feels in a voyage. Not till a dead calm fell towards evening was she able to leave her cabin to enjoy in this balmy air the beauties of the starry sky, and to forget that her sight of Rome was deferred. In fact, this silent contemplation of the starry firmament, with all its sweet dreams and hopes, was one of her quiet pleasures, and she exclaimed

aloud, that this higher world exercised a vast and truly religious influence on the mind. But in the midst of her enthusiasm the anxious Markus entreated her to return to her cabin and to go to sleep. Next day the vessel passed close to the island of Elba, but a visit to it was refused by the captain of the steamer; it seemed during this journey as if she had constantly to contend with petty disappointments.

It was but poor compensation to spend the next night at Leghorn instead of in Rome. If Rome is admitted to be the first city in Italy, and indeed in Europe, Leghorn certainly takes the lowest place; but here both joy and sorrow awaited the Empress. General Rauch, one of her true friends, brought the news of the death of her aunt Princess William. This admirable Princess, daughter of the Landgrave Ludwig Wilhelm of Hesse Homburg, was closely connected with the childhood of Alexandra, and on the death of Queen Louise had been revered by her as a second mother. It was thought hazardous to convey these tidings the same evening to the invalid in her present depressed mood; and it was wisely settled to defer the intelligence till next day, when the Crown Prince of Würtemberg, the happy bridegroom, arrived, and his presence alleviated the bitter sorrow. The Empress did not wish to go through Pisa without visiting the Campo Santo; so by command of the Grand Duke, high dignitaries and ciceroni were appointed to conduct her through those monuments of the dead. She was satisfied by viewing only some of the tombs, that of the Emperor Henry the Seventh,

and Count Algarotti, chamberlain of Frederick the Great, after which she proceeded without delay to Florence. She disliked festive receptions quite as much as her father formerly did; and to escape these in her present delicate state of health, she resolved to drive in advance with Countess Tiesenhausen in an unpretending calèche, and simply dressed, so that she might not excite any attention, leaving to her waiting-maid her state carriage drawn by six horses; thus she had long arrived at the hotel, when the state carriage was being received at the gate of the city by flying banners and stormy cheers.

The first days were more fatiguing than they would have been in Rome, being devoted to social obligations, visits, and receiving the Grand Ducal family, the two brothers of the Emperor Napoleon, Count St. Leu, ex-King of Holland, and the Duc de Montfort, ex-King of Westphalia. That both were in a certain degree connected with the Russian Imperial family was undeniable. The Duke of Leuchtenberg, one of Alexandra's sons-in-law, was nephew of the old King of Holland, and the charming Hortensé highly esteemed by the Empress, though personally unknown to her. The Duc de Montfort had married the Princess of Würtemberg, Frederika Catherine, daughter of the first King Frederick, who thus became the aunt of the future Imperial son-in-law. The visit of these two ex-Kings only served to awaken painful memories of a melancholy fact in the heart of Alexandra. The presence of the daughter of the unfortunate Queen Louise, now Empress of Russia, must have seemed to those two decayed

royalties a bitter sarcasm on the part of destiny. But in these singular circumstances she appeared, as she always did, in all her womanly dignity without any Imperial pomp, while her conversation was reserved but pleasing. Gradually her whole suite assembled from Rome, and the previous society of Palermo and Naples were shortly before the end of the journey to be reunited for a week. Her joyful meeting with her sister reminded her, however, vividly of the loss of Rome; for all who returned thence were highly delighted with the noble objects they had seen, and not one person had been ill or even indisposed, while many attributed the over caution of Mandt to perverseness.

After resting a few days the august lady drove through the principal streets of the city and then to the Cascino, the gayest rendezvous in Italy. As her illness in Naples had deprived her of all enjoyment of art, and indeed only permitted her two visits to enjoy the beauties of nature, these hours proved a tonic both for body and soul, and she sincerely thanked heaven that her physicians did not forbid her to visit the Pitti and Uffizi Palaces. The crowds of people to see the northern guest were far greater than in Naples, where, with the exception of the first and last day, she remained quite unobserved. It was, however, quickly discovered that it was not so much curiosity to see the Empress as the most undisguised admiration of the wondrous beauty of the interesting bride, the fair Olga, that attracted such masses of people. The Grand Duke gave the friendly advice not to inform the public of their intended excursions, as several hundred

Poles lived in the city, whose deeds and doings his police could neither keep watch over nor divine. On the next morning a visit was made without the Empress to the majestic Duomo, of which the architect, Arnolfo di Lapo, said, "I have protected thee against earthquakes; may God protect thee against lightning." Although this visit to the Duomo had been made incognito at ten o'clock in the morning, still, shortly after, such a crowd of the populace assembled before the building, that the guards placed there were obliged to draw a cord along the principal entrance that the ladies might get into their carriages without any obstacle; but when they left the church their intention was to view this mighty structure from the spot called The Stone of Dante. They therefore walked quietly round the square without taking any notice of the terrific crowd. Suddenly, after a violent struggle with the people and the police, a young Italian vaulted over the cord and approached the Grand Duchess Olga. Alarm seized the suite, who stopped him and asked what he wanted—"To see the greatest beauty in the world, and to see her close." Olga had at that moment just reached the stone and turned her head towards the Duomo without knowing what was passing behind her, when the young artist said in an imploring tone, "Grant me one minute and I will give you half my life." The princess did not know of this incident till afterwards, and therefore continued to gaze quite undisturbed at the superb Duomo. At that period, the time of Gregory the Sixteenth, Italy was dead in every direction. Rossini and Catalani

were almost the only celebrated personages among the great composers and singers of that day. The travellers visited its art treasures in dead temples and galleries, and the Italian was proud of preserving, in the artistic creations of Italy, an ideal which in all times had been a stranger to the north; it seemed now as if the living north had snatched away the last dead wreath from that lonely land. On the same day the Empress visited the great gallery of the Uffizi. She was thoroughly informed as to what she was here to find, and contented herself by making closer acquaintance with the Niobe group, and the treasures in the Tribune. Her eye was less accustomed to marble than to colour and drawing, and she was highly surprised by the beauty of the Venus de Medici, and said that every woman must confess the superiority of her form, and the purity of virgin thought more conspicuous than in the draperies of the modern world. She compared this Grecian work long and earnestly with both Titian's pictures, and found the latter unrefined in comparison with this Greek masterpiece. She preferred above all Correggio's "Madonna" praying before the child Christ, and the two holy families by Raphael.

She gazed long at the Niobe group without uttering a single word. It seemed as if this work of art awoke within her feelings better left unspoken, being seldom understood by others. Among the conceptions of the great Italian painters, she gave the most decided preference to those of Leonardo da Vinci, while those of Raphael did not fulfil her expectations. After walking through the whole gallery she quitted it, esteeming

herself happy at having enjoyed an hour of pure artistic delight. The day was fine, so she ventured to undertake a drive to the heights of Florence, whence all the riches of the environs are visible. The next day was sacred to the Imperial family, being the birth-day of the heir-apparent, $\frac{17}{29}$ April, and faithful to Russian custom it was celebrated by a mass in the Villa Demidof. So many Russian families were present on the occasion, that they might have thought themselves in Peterhof. Anatol Demidof, the proprietor of the boundless Ural mines, and author of travels in Southern Russia, had married Princess Mathilde of Montfort, daughter of the ex-King of Westphalia. He lived more in Italy and France than in Russia, and had built one of the most beautiful villas in the neighbourhood of Florence, to which a Greek chapel was attached. The Russians have always zealously provided for their own religious services in foreign countries, while the building of Protestant churches in other lands meets with many obstacles, and, owing to scanty contributions, is often delayed with true German procrastination. Many Russian guests were invited on this day, both to the Imperial and the Marshal's table, and the Empress appeared herself at the latter in order to drink the health of her son. In the evening, the Tuscan Court was invited by her; two ladies of the society, Countess Orsini and Princess Labanof, by their charming singing excited a discussion among the guests as to which bore off the palm. The precedent of the Empress in attracting into her circle talented guests cannot be sufficiently admired. The

great artist is thus not excluded from Court, and in this way the pretensions and caprices of mediocrity are crushed. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, Leopold the Second, of German descent, felt more sympathy in conversing with the Empress than the King of Naples, who was so absorbed in formalities. He often brought forward the small extent of his country, but adding that the riches of his art treasures, the grand reminiscences of its mediæval age, allotted it a distinguished place in the annals of the world. He also asserted that Italy, and especially Tuscany, was the country that presented the greatest enjoyment of life. He invited the Empress to inspect the Pitti gallery on the ensuing day, and to permit him the honour of being her cicerone, to which she consented, remarking, that she could only look at ten or twelve pictures at most.

"The Pitti gallery, however, contains nothing but masterpieces," rejoined the Grand Duke.

"Then I must look at ten of the most remarkable," was the reply.

The far-famed Venus of Canova did not captivate her so much as she had anticipated, and in her frankness she could not withhold her opinion from the Grand Duke,—"I ought to have seen this before the Medicean Venus, for it teaches me first fully to appreciate the incomparable art of the Greeks." But the more was she attracted by Raphael's Madonna della Sedia, and by Allori's Judith, which enchants every one in spite of the coldness of its beauty. In short, she here found compensation for Rome, that would probably have been more trying to her strength.

When she left the gallery, she said, "It is true that there are only *chefs-d'œuvre* in this palace, and yet I would not exchange the two pictures in my cabinet, Murillo's 'Holy Family,' and Domenichino's 'St. John,' even for the Raphael." The Grand Duke escorted his august guest and her whole suite on the same day to Poggio di Cajano, the splendid country-palace of the Medici. The Empress was well aware that this villa had been the scene of the tragic death of the notorious Bianca Capello, and avoided the subject in conversation, although the death of this fair Venetian, so veiled in mystery, particularly interested her. She was impressed by the fruitful produce, and the animating power of spring, and considered the Grand Duke fortunate in ruling over such a lovely and fertile land. It was a precious day in her life granted to her by art and nature combined, and she felt herself better and stronger than for a long time past.

Only a few days remained for fair Florence, so every advantage was taken of the favourable weather to see in all haste the other remarkable objects in the city. Alexandra lingered longest in the church of Santa Croce, and declared Florence to be the most interesting city in the European world, and justly so, for no other can boast of having produced so great a number of men of grand intellect—Dante, Macchiavelli, Michael Angelo, Galileo, Alfieri, Aretino, etc., etc. Athens alone could once pride itself like Florence on being the home of intellectual culture. May 3d—N. S. April 21st—in the Russian calendar was the Empress's name-day, which this year was to be celebrated under another

sky, and far away from her own beloved home. It was also the name-day of her daughter departed Alexandra, who had now been twenty months in the grave. This anniversary passed therefore in the utmost seclusion, and a death mass, devoid of all pomp, was performed in honour of the deceased, in the villa Deimdof, only the few persons of the suite who had been most intimate with her lamented daughter being present. But her newly revived grief was greater than her recently restored strength, and during the mass she sunk down in a fainting state, and required several hours of rest and fresh air to effect her recovery. She passed the evening quietly in her cabinet, with a few of her suite. Next morning an unusual stir prevailed in the city; the whole Florentine Court appeared in full uniform in the presence of the Empress before mass, and in spite of her swoon of yesterday, she was unusually lively and gay, and rejoiced to find that the mass was to be attended not only by all the Russians, but also by many Florentines and strangers. She only invited ladies to her own table, but commanded a brilliant banquet to be prepared for the gentlemen of her own suite, as well as those of the Florentine Court. The back of the Italian hotel she inhabited looks on the Arno, and on this evening a scaffolding was erected opposite for an illumination. Great was the universal surprise on recognising, on the other side of the Arno, the Exchange of Petersburg, with its hundred pillars and the two columns, visible from the Empress's cabinet in Petersburg. On the river itself floated illuminated gondolas, and from these resounded the loveliest songs

of Mendelssohn and Weber in the Italian language, and also the Russian National Hymn. It was a warm Italian May evening, full of enchantment for Alexandra, who enjoyed it with a grateful heart. With the stroke of eleven o'clock all was over, the physicians who had remained close by, went tranquilly home, but the Empress felt that with this evening beautiful Italy vanished like a dream. When she left the balcony and entered her cabinet, two of her dearest friends took leave of her, Baron Meyendorf and General Rauch. Next morning the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg and Princess Louise left Florence, and set off towards their home, having bid farewell to their beloved relative.

Both sisters felt that a singularly charming episode in their lives was over; they had passed about seven months together in all sisterly and youthful happiness. As Alexandra felt so well, and the weather was so favourable, she once more drove rapidly through Florence, in the most simple dress and calèche, stopped at the gallery, and took a cordial farewell of all the masterpieces there. By the afternoon all was prepared for the journey next morning, and a portion of the servants despatched in two steamboats to Leghorn. The Empress herself occupied the evening in writing letters. Next morning at nine o'clock she was ready to set off, but three hours yet intervened before the time of departure, so she took advantage of this to see the Poggio Imperiale palace, outside the town. The road, that passes through a shady avenue of trees, is gloomy, and would have deepened the melancholy mood of the august lady into positive sadness, but for the prospect

from the palace, which is very varied, but finest of all from a hill above, called Arcetri, where is still to be seen the peasant's hut inhabited for ten years by Galileo. He designated cities as prisons of the mind, but was himself under close surveillance on this height. "For the second time," exclaimed the Empress, "I chance to greet the lovely spring morning of Jean Paul's 'Titan,' and am happy and thankful to heaven that I can leave Florence with this charming and profound impression." When she returned to the hotel, she found more than two hundred persons who wished to be presented to her before her departure. She requested them to allow her half-an-hour's rest, and then she bade them all a kindly farewell, and with tearful eyes, entered her state carriage.

The journey by Bologna, Venice, and Vienna was so timed that she should arrive in Petersburg the beginning of June, when the late northern spring would bestow on her the same warmth and verdure that she had uninterruptedly enjoyed during the last six months. Since the October of the previous year she had experienced perpetual spring in Palermo, Naples, and Florence; and in the north, from June, followed two warm months, so that she obtained almost a whole year of a mild climate. She left several costly souvenirs to the Florentine Court, among others a piece of her own work, and none were forgotten who in Sicily also had contributed to her amusement and health. In Bologna she saw Raphael's St. Cecilia, and those two living monuments of Italian art, Rossini and Catalani, and in Venice the "Assumption of the Virgin." That city left a melancholy im-

pression on her mind, from the want of all verdure, which to her was a part of life. In spite of the long fatiguing journey, she continued cheerful, and her invigorated powers enabled her to travel the 300 miles and to arrive in health. It seemed as if the superb climate of Italy clung devotedly to her, for during the two succeeding months a bright sky continued over the city and its environs. The Emperor in his joy at seeing his wife so much younger and better, once more rewarded those physicians, in particular, who had opposed his will, and so, strictly carried out their own views. A fortnight afterwards arrived Constantine, who, since he left his mother so ill in Naples, had visited Algiers, Lisbon, and Portsmouth. The Emperor had not seen the young pilgrim for a year, for Constantine did not arrive in Palermo till after the Emperor left it. The Prince of Prussia too came to join the now cheerful happy family circle.

CHAPTER VIII.

PETERSBURG IN 1847-52.

THE journey of the Empress not only produced a good effect on her health, but her mind and spirit were equally invigorated, new chords vibrated within her, those that had slept were freshly awakened, and all her views of life now soared beyond their former narrow limits. The same change was perceptible in the Emperor. For twenty years after his ascension to the throne, he had been burdened by oppressive cares of government, and never granted his health even the necessary rest that all his ministers and officials occasionally enjoyed; while a number of Russian families, owing to their wealth, easily overcame the obstacles to living abroad, and whole colonies settled in Paris, Naples, Rome, and Florence, and in German watering-places, especially Baden-Baden, and more Russian gold was scattered in these places than in all Russia besides. Nicholas had always been involved in a routine of business, and a circle of duties; at most he had only accompanied his wife to a watering-place, or brought her home from thence. He had not again seen France since his first visit there. He had scarcely

arrived in England in 1844, when he was recalled by the illness of his daughter; Italy was comparatively an unknown land to him, though even his passing stay there made a forcible impression on him. "I admired the masterly works of Roman architecture," said he to a friend, "above all, St. Peter's, but I also rejoiced to find on my return here that, even after Rome, Petersburg does not lose its grand effect. Within a short time we have accomplished our share, according to our powers." He acknowledged the Vatican and its treasures to be incomparable, and in a letter from Rome to his consort in Palermo, he told her how deeply he had been affected by that city. In the different galleries he saw many objects that he would gladly have transferred to the Hermitage. But he never left the studio of an artist without large orders, and quitted no city without taking with him some work of art, a fresh ornament for the Hermitage. "The Petersburg of the future will have much in common with Rome," said he, "only we must always share the climate with the bears." Many other things, moreover, had not escaped his eagle-eye, and he freely praised many regulations. The new Hermitage, built under Klenze's guidance, he now, during his morning walks, viewed with other eyes, and rejoiced in the prospect of soon himself opening this Temple of the Muses. Artists had always been encouraged by him; we know that Gudin and Horace Vernet stayed with him in Peterhof, but from this time forward he devoted greater attention to the sphere of art, and looked on much with the eyes of a traveller in foreign lands.

The visit of the Prince of Prussia at that time to Peterhof, sustained this mood, for in their intercourse, the Prince turned the conversation, if not on Italy, on England, and her great national public buildings. One morning in Peterhof, Nicholas said, "I shall have a trying day, for I have invited to dinner neither ministers nor officials, but only people with minds not preoccupied." But even business men could not conceal from themselves that their ruler was inspired with a different spirit. Yet the calumnies in the public foreign papers about Alexandra's journey seemed to have no end, and it was the same with more secret complaints in certain classes of Russian society. Her lavish expenditure was censured, and the more malignant the attacks in foreign papers, the more were they credited in Petersburg. Christian, seventh King of Denmark, was accompanied on his journey to England and France in 1768 by fifty chamberlains, scattered gold pieces for his own diversion among the populace, and Denmark was forced to pay for the King's frivolity by the imposition of new taxes for years. All European papers commended the King's spirit; the Parisian Academy admired this same man who in history was designated as "the weak." The Empress of the immense realm of Russia, whose Court had larger sums at its disposal than the whole income of the Danish kingdom, was compelled to pass six months in the South of Europe on account of failing health, and thus furnished newspaper scribes with materials for the most incredible distortion of facts. It would be easy to prove to the world that the cost of this journey barely exceeded

her yearly budget, which at that time consisted of a million of rubles. Unhappily this was no passing outcry, but it continued to be an article of faith, that the Empress was extravagant. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand stupidly repeat what they hear from others, and newspaper writers are always eager to get hold of novelties, to furnish amusement for their wearied public.

Alexandra, however, scarcely heard a hint of these distressing reports, so her gay mood and improved health did not suffer. She visited the town, and was everywhere received with enthusiasm, especially in the various institutions, where the young people welcomed her with flowers, songs, and their own needlework. The society was glad that she was once more by the Neva, as the past winter had been cold and lifeless without her. She also visited several churches, to return thanks for her recovery, and gave sums of money to almshouses and hospitals. She did not forget either to see her friends Countess Bobrinsky and Baroness Frederiks, and to express to them her joy at her restoration to health. The mood of the Imperial family can always be gathered from the countenances of society in Petersburg, and the new life at Court pervaded all other classes.

Some trying hours, however, awaited the august mother in the separation from her daughter Olga, who had hitherto never left her side, and, as we know, accompanied her all through her journey. There were many doubts in the public mind whether this Princess, born and brought up in the greatest and most brilliant Court in the

world, could possibly be happy within the narrow limits of Würtemberg. Since her betrothal the Princess had made a point of gaining every information as to the country. The Russian ambassador at that Court, Prince Alexander Gortschakof, had already sent her some interesting reports on the subject to Palermo. She was thus perfectly acquainted with the circumstances of the Court of Würtemberg, though she had never seen it, and her calm but clear understanding saved her from all delusions. She knew and understood the words King William the First once addressed to a traveller,—"Don't expect in my country the art-treasures of Munich. When my reign commenced, I said to myself, first what is necessary, then what is useful, and last of all the fine arts; so in that respect we are far behind Munich, but in all essentials far in advance of it." She also distinctly understood the difference between absolute and constitutional government, and knew what position she was to assume, first as Crown-Princess and afterwards as Queen; she further was aware of the veneration in which her aunt, Queen Catherine, was held in that country. Besides this intimate knowledge of the circumstances of the country, the fairest dowry she took with her from her paternal home was a loving attachment to domestic life, and the desire to effect in Würtemberg what her grandmother, the Empress Maria Feodorowna, had effected in Russia, so she could calmly encounter her future destiny.

The nuptials took place, according both to the Greek and Protestant rites, in Peterhof, early in July, and the Imperial family were on this account compelled to ex-

change for a week their beautiful shady country palace for the dusty city. The public at large had thus an opportunity of seeing the Empress once more in society after her long absence, and to take a parting look at the lovely Olga. After the celebration was over she passed a whole month in Peterhof and Zarskoe-Selò, and then hastened towards her new home, accompanied by a thousand good wishes, and was cordially received in Würtemberg. The court suite of every princess is formed in the country she adopts, therefore she was only escorted by one secretary, Herr von Adelung, and her former governess, Fräulein von Akoulof.

Thus the happy family circle of the Emperor was gradually dispersing, and the Empress felt very solitary; not one of her three lovely daughters now belonged to her home. After the succession of unavoidable fêtes and visits she was again indisposed, and the physicians, as well as herself, desired for her greater retirement from the world, and that she should live as she had done in Palermo. There is no private life for an Empress, and although she made no longer any claims on society, still the Petersburg world was far from agreeing to this. For more than ten years she had given up her favourite amusement, dancing, but it was nevertheless expected that she should at least show herself both at Court balls and in the city. The number of Court fêtes is not few, and, as we already know, are all fatiguing, and those in the town were not fewer than at Court. To appear in public at all, even without any particular excitement, demands much strength, but the Empress is constrained also to receive a quantity of indifferent

visitors, and nothing is more irritating to nervous people than official visits and constrained conversations under perpetual restrictions. She clearly saw that a secluded life, like that in Palermo, was as impossible in the Winter Palace as in Peterhof or Zarskoe-Selò, though the two latter, by their distance from the capital, afforded her a certain degree of repose and an opportunity to live according to her own inclinations. The existence of the Empress was inexhaustibly rich in all that the world can offer, and yet she often envied a burgher family the quiet in which they enjoyed their modest happiness. Towards the end of August, when the last summer days of the North vanish, the Court repaired to quiet Zarskoe-Selò, where it was their intention to pass two months in strict seclusion.

In addition to the sorrow of parting with her daughter a new source of excitement now occurred; her son Constantine had accompanied his sister to Stuttgart, and gone from Berlin by Altenburg, for the express purpose of making the acquaintance of Princess Alexandrina, the youngest daughter of Duke Joseph. This young Princess, in the year 1844, when at Kissingen, where the Altenburg Court were staying, attracted the attention of many Russians by her beauty, grace, and animation, and her name had often been mentioned since that time by the Imperial family. On his way back to Palermo the Emperor met this family in Bologna, where he passed an hour with the Duke's mother, his own first cousin, recalling the bright memories of their childhood. Duke Ludwig of Würtemberg, father of the Duchess and brother of the

Empress Maria Feodorowna, was several years in the Russian service, and the cradles of his two daughters, Duchess Amelia of Saxe Altenburg, and the now widowed Pauline, Queen of Würtemberg, had stood on the shores of the Neva. But Duke Joseph, father of the young Princess, was more nearly connected with the Russian Court than might at first appear. His mother was the sister of Queen Louise of Prussia, and consequently the Duke was first cousin of Alexandra. By the narrations of the Duchess the imagination of Princess Alexandrina had been directed to the Winter Palace, the scene of all their sports. How agreeably surprised was the Emperor to meet with a family nearly related to him so far from home, and the Princess still more to see before her the Czar, of whose palace her childhood had so often dreamt. Nicholas, on the same evening, wrote to his consort, mentioning the singular charm of the young Princess, adding, that she was to become the bride of his second son. He told the same to Count Orlof, his companion, when he left the Duchess's apartments. A letter now arrived from Constantine, in which he briefly said, "She, or no other." His parents were rather startled by this declaration, their son being only nineteen, and his education not yet completed. After some consultation the Emperor at last said, in a decided tone, to his wife, "When I first knew you, I was also firmly resolved to marry you or no one, and I was then only eighteen; write to him therefore that I give my consent." He added, "It is remarkable that four different persons who have seen the Princess bestow equal

praise on her, and that my opinion is the same I will not deny. So let it be—only they must wait two years." The Princess was at that time only sixteen. One year was to be spent in completing her education in Altenburg, and the second in Russia, for her preparation. Constantine was also to remain a year in his former position.

The Empress formed her plans in order to spend the two dreary autumn months in Zarskoe-Selò as agreeably as possible, and in the mode most beneficial to her health; she therefore divided the day very strictly for her various occupations, and she hoped at last to fulfil a long-cherished wish of hers, to hear the masterpieces of German literature read to her in a certain succession. Not one of these, beginning with the "Messiah," was unknown to her, indeed she was thoroughly versed in most German authors, but she confessed that she had not carried away a thorough impression of each, from having been so constantly interrupted. In the Anitschkow Palace there was more time at her disposal, when formerly Grand Duchess; and Schiller, and especially Jean Paul, were most familiar of all to her. She sympathized with the ideal phase of woman's nature in both these poets, though her intelligent perceptions found Goethe's clear representation of life the more responsive of the two. She now began with "Faust," and was not even scared by the difficulties that the reader meets with in the second part. She invited to these readings her daughter-in-law, the wife of the heir-apparent, and her daughter Marie, and some other highly cultivated ladies. The sympathy of all was extra-

ordinary, and gave rise to many clever remarks and discussions with the reader. Still these harmless pleasures did not continue so unclouded as might have been expected. Often in the midst of the most lively disquisition a secretary of State was announced; and as the Empress never allowed any one to wait without some very special reason, the reading suddenly came to a close. It was not, however, business alone, but often mere formal visits, farewells, and greetings that distroyed their amusement.

"Faust" was not yet ended when in a certain Court circle voices were uplifted expressing discontent with the Empress's seclusion; many, indeed, were thus deprived of a promenade or a ride beside her carriage, while others were of opinion that an Empress of Russia had no right to occupy herself with literature. In the course of some weeks it seemed as if these perpetual interruptions were purposely made, till at length the Emperor gave the strictest orders that his wife was not to be disturbed. The physicians also urged that, for the benefit of her health, she should be allowed to enjoy this quiet amusement. Consequently only one interruption occurred during the two autumnal months, on October 10th, when Nicholas invited all those who had been with his consort in Palermo to a brilliant banquet, and there took the opportunity of thanking them sincerely and warmly for all the sympathy they had shown her. And yet a tone of sadness mingled with Alexandra's mood. News came from Vienna of the death of the eldest daughter of the Grand Duchess Helena. Not only the sincere sorrow

she felt at this event, but the too vivid remembrance of the death of her own dearly cherished Alexandra, reduced her to nearly the same state she was in at Palermo. To this was added an annoying circumstance—the Grand Duchess Helena was left almost helpless after her daughter's death in Vienna, and entreated that a maid of honour might be sent to her as quickly as possible; those whom she named, however, considered the journey there, and their duties when they arrived, too trying, and showed very little inclination to go. In just indignation Nicholas said, "We hear a great deal of self-sacrifice in our cause so long as we are attending balls and festivities, but when a real service is to be done to my sister-in-law in her need they all decline to go." And, in truth, courtiers only willingly perform a service when by so doing they insure for themselves a greater one.

As living in the country agreed with Alexandra, she remained this year, contrary to custom, till November 19th, that is, till December 1st (new style) in Zarskoe-Selò; the snow lay several feet deep on the ground, and the evenings in the scantily-lighted little country town were truly dismal. But the pleasant gathering of the whole family in the solitary palace, and the charms of reading, proved true balsam to the suffering lady. In Petersburg, owing to the death of the Grand Duchess Maria Michaelowna, all gaiety was at end, for her excellent father Michael was lost in grief at having been deprived by death of his two eldest daughters in a couple of years. The Court did not once visit the Italian opera, which invariably

closes when Easter begins; they avoided even inviting artists to the palace, and they, as well as the city, passed a very retired winter. For the Empress, however, it was a most enjoyable one, as she continued her German readings, though more interrupted than in the country; at the commencement of Easter, when Scriptural readings ensued, she had finished all Goethe's poetical works, and declared that they had invigorated her soul as much as the bright sky of Palermo.

Since her return from Italy, her select evening circle had an additional member. The new Prussian Ambassador, General von Rochow, suited the Empress in his conversation, and was often invited to dinner by the Emperor likewise. The formality with which the Russians often reproached the countrymen of Alexandra, was less obvious in this ambassador, and his interests took a far wider range than his own peculiar vocation. His was the merit of making known to their Majesties the changed spirit that for some time had begun to prevail so conspicuously. The wide difference that existed between Goethe and Heine and the poets of the latter century, did not escape Alexandra herself. The master-works of earlier literature were read aloud to her, but she was eager to become acquainted with those of the present also, and few remarkable works of the last forty years were unknown to her. To her intimate friends she often expressed the evil presentiment she felt with regard to the whole of the literature of the day—but they tranquillized her. When the scene between Philip and the Marquis Rosa in "Don Carlos" was read to

her, she said, "We need not look for that time; we are in the midst of it; not only is thought freely expressed, but the most audacious ideas published." Her apprehensions lest a stormy period should ensue were heightened by the continuance of these readings. "I saw Sicily and Italy just before their gates were closed," said she another time, "and doubt much whether I shall ever see Rome, having missed it then. The new Pope is himself helping to light the torch."

Before the Court repaired in spring to Zarskoe-Selò, a gloomy feeling prevailed in the capital. Nicholas was seriously ill, and the strongest suspicions were entertained by the public. Mandt, being a Catholic, was the object of the most profound distrust. During the Emperor's journey of the previous year to the interior of Russia, he had made some painful discoveries, and returned much out of humour, and in the course of the winter he found out one unpardonable abuse after another, so that the tone of his mind became desponding. In April he was very ill, and confined to bed with a bilious attack, and was only saved from a dangerous illness by severe remedies; these succeeded perfectly, but gave rise in the city to the most odious conjectures. In the same week the Empress was one day so weak that she was visible only to her attendants. In the whole of Nicholas's reign, it was the first time that both their Majesties were ill at the same time, causing extreme sorrow in Petersburg. In spite of the illness of both his parents, Constantine set off to England, at the

close of his education, where he remained for several months; he wrote regularly to his family, and won the esteem of most English statesmen. He passed through Germany on his way, and visited his betrothed bride in Altenburg, who was to make her entry into Petersburg in the year 1847. The Empress passed the summer in excellent health, and in eager expectation of seeing the bride, who, to the joy of the family, arrived on October 12th, and brought new life into the family circle. Although educated at a petty court, she adopted the tone of the family with so much ease, that it seemed almost as if she had been born in the Winter Palace.

Three severe days followed for the delicate Empress and the Princess; on one occurred the declaration of the majority of the Grand Duke Constantine, who was twenty on September 9th; on the second, the church betrothal with Princess Alexandrine, who, after being received into the Greek Church, was named the Grand Duchess Alexandra Josephowna; and on the third, the presentation of all those who had the privilege of attending Court, about 8000 in number. After these festivities, the Court remained in the capital, and a gay season commenced, one ball succeeding another; it seemed as if the society wished to make up for the time they had lost during several years past; and yet, often during the greatest mirth and festive pleasure, serious-looking men were to be seen sitting in corners, their faces overshadowed by gloomy thoughts. The newspapers daily brought more important intelligence; the Empress, who read the foreign papers eagerly and

constantly, became more and more a prey to alarming presentiments, and spoke openly on the subject. When a well-known diplomatist left Petersburg at that time and asked, "Shall we see your Majesties next summer abroad?" "Have you any faith then in a year of peace?" said she; "it appears to me, judging from the newspapers, and other writings, that a universal storm threatens us." The diplomatist replied, "According to the newspapers, it certainly is so, but we know better in our circles." God grant you may be right!" rejoined the Empress, "I have anticipated no good for a long time past." Her husband thoroughly shared his illustrious consort's anxieties, and appeared graver than ever. Princess Lieven wrote daily letters from Paris at that time to the Empress, but nothing had the power to tranquillize her. She inquired about Guizot, from a person who had passed the preceding summer in Paris, as she considered the Princess's views one-sided, and learned that, in spite of all Guizot's great merits, he was hated by the greater number in France. The capital now included some very grave circles, but some also whom no news could induce to interrupt their gay balls. The "Butter week" came, and its balls and theatres rendered careless and indifferent the last ears that still remained open to evil rumours from Europe. It was not, however, carelessness alone that still celebrated brilliant fêtes, it was also the conviction that, if the whole of Europe were to be overthrown, Russia would stand fast in her granite repose. On the Saturday of this week a rumour was spread in the town that Guizot had fled, and it reached a house at dinner-time where

two diplomatists argued the question very hotly. Many thought that the whole storm would now be finally appeased, and hastened to attend next day the last ball in the Winter Palace, beginning at twelve o'clock in the forenoon.

The rooms were brilliant with lights and splendid dresses; a glance at the mirthful, dancing crowd might have led to the belief that this was the realm of lasting peace and happiness, when the folding-doors of the thronged ball-room were suddenly flung open; all eyes turned thither, when the Emperor passed through the doorway into the middle of the room, with a gloomy brow, and a paper in his hand, making a sign to the musicians, who stopped short in the middle of a bar, while the dancers stood still and motionless. After some moments of uneasy expectation, the Czar called out in a voice of thunder, "Gentlemen, saddle your horses, France is a Republic!" He then quitted the room, and the ball closed. This news penetrated the same day into the farthest corners of the towns, and even into houses that scarcely ever heard of any European event. Merchants of the third guild asked if it was the same French king who inherited the throne when Nicholas's reign first began, and were thankful to live in a country where their ruler granted them his protection. In higher circles it was said that Louis Philippe deserved no better fate, but the maintenance of the French Republic was doubted. Germany was pronounced to be tranquil and fast asleep, and incapable of any great or dangerous movement, and unbounded was

the astonishment when, next Sunday, intelligence arrived that in the south-west of Germany serious disturbances had broken out. The Emperor said to his two youngest sons, Nicholas and Michael, who were still busy with their education, "Possibly your studies next summer may be continued at the seat of war." It was thought undoubted that Russia and Austria would stand fast in these storms, and again, on the ensuing Sunday, came tidings that Prince Metternich had fled. This information found its way into an apartment where a Frenchman was giving lectures on gastronomy, in which he had specially commended Prince Metternich's experience in that science. Then no delusion was any longer possible as to what might follow. Prince Metternich was far from popular in the higher circles of Petersburg, for, with the most bland, smiling manner, his position had always been inimical to Russia, but he was one of the props of conservatism all over Europe, and the Viennese had always been esteemed amiable epicureans, though blind politicians. The very next Sunday came a courier from the Russian Embassy in Berlin, a young man whose family was nearly connected with the Imperial House. He brought his despatches straight into the cabinet of the Empress, and was commissioned to detail himself what haste prevented being written down. In the Winter Palace little was heard of the contents of these despatches, but a great deal as to their effect on Alexandra. In the midst of the narration she fainted away, with these words on her lips, "and my brother William." The

next newspapers that came stated to the startled inhabitants all that had taken place in Berlin; but though the storm was so close to the boundaries of Russia, its capital continued in the most entire tranquillity, its inhabitants commending loudly the hitherto often secretly detested rule of their Emperor, as the best and surest of all.

Nicholas appeared more frequently than ever in the streets on foot, and was gazed at with reverence by his people. The devotion of that class called the "black people" was greater than ever, and yet presented one of the most singular spectacles. While the citizen King, Louis Philippe, for years past had driven rapidly in public in a carriage made of iron, to protect his life, and yet had not escaped his fate, the hero of December 14th appeared among his people with a calm demeanour, and saw with joy, confidence in his person expressed in every countenance. When he drove out on Easter Day after mass, with his consort, in an open carriage, the enormous space round the Winter Palace was crowded with people, shouting thundering hurrahs in their honour. Soon the public voice of sarcasm was applied to each individual country. Three flasks were sketched; one, filled with foaming champagne, had flung away the cork, ornamented with a crown; a second, filled with beer, offered the same spectacle; the third with brandy, stood upright, and well corked, beside the others, and on the top was written in Russian, "Crown seal." The news from Poland seemed satisfactory; the eye of the Field-Marshal kept watch everywhere, and in the

greater part of inner Russia they heard scarcely anything of European events.

After the fêtes, the Court went as usual to the country, where the Empress had more leisure to study the whole movement. It seemed remarkable to many statesmen that, in a humoristic Berlin calendar, the 24th February was on the previous year marked as dangerous for France; and in the same witty book, Germany being described as sunk in profound sleep, proved that this was more than a mere happy hit. When, shortly before the opening of the Frankfort Parliament, bonfires blazed on all the hills, Nesselrode significantly said, "No more danger. It is all childish German enthusiasm, which will blaze away like these fires: in a year all will be over." But Petersburg in the next two years was no longer what she had been in old days previous to the month of March. The first striking symptom was, that shortly all carriages-and-four disappeared, and the richest families carried out retrenchments. Moreover, the Emperor had long set this example to his people. A vast number of Russian families now returned to Petersburg who had been settled, nay, taken root, for years abroad, and when driven away by the revolution, remembered their fatherland, and found there a peaceful refuge. Among these were many young ladies born in foreign countries, whose first and most difficult task was to learn the language of their parents and country. While formerly the steam-vessels from Petersburg, Stettin, and Lübeck were crowded with travellers, they now went thither quite empty, and returned overladen.

Petersburg was richer than formerly by some thousands of inhabitants; and as in summer every one goes to the country, there was a great deficiency in accommodation.

In politically quiet Russia, however, symptoms soon showed themselves of Asiatic cholera, that in a short time spread as violently as seventeen years before. It, of course, raged worst in the town; but even Peterhof did not entirely escape, owing to the unusual concourse of inhabitants. The Empress passed the whole summer in the country in entire seclusion, and solely occupied in instructive reading. She communicated her thoughts and views without reserve to the excited Emperor, who was certainly taken more by surprise by the great movement of the day than his wife, who had already recognised in the newspapers of the preceding year the stormy petrel that foreboded a tempest. The aversion of Nicholas to what is called a Constitutional Government was well known. He not only saw in it the monarchical principle weakened, but also free national movements checked; indeed, at that time he expressed to a foreign ambassador his dislike to all constitutions, because they favoured the privileges of birth in one class, and immunity from taxes of another, but utterly disregarded the actual people. We also know that he considered a republic entitled to be placed beside an unlimited monarchy. "Republics in our day are impossible," said he to one of his Ministers, "because there are no republicans. A Frenchman of the present day writes to me and asks me for an Order, such things being abolished in the Republic. Would a true republican thus apply to a

foreign monarch? My Russians do the same; but they do not talk about a republic."

The domestic happiness of the Emperor, even amid these changed times, remained the same that it had ever been. He now adorned charming Peterhof with a number of little Sicilian souvenirs, drove about with his family, and looked on with the greatest composure at the disturbances in other countries. The young Princess, Alexandrina, remained with her future mother-in-law, and shared her seclusion. She learned the Russian tongue, studied the history of the country, and supplied the place of her lamented daughter to the bereaved mother. On August 30, the marriage of the young couple took place in the Winter Palace, and the Court went for a week to the capital. For more than a year the Marble Palace had been newly arranged for Constantine, having been very little inhabited by the previous Grand Duke of the same name. Besides this, the young couple inherited Pawlowsk and Strelna, according to some family compact, as country residences; and in the latter many changes had been made. After these nuptials, Alexandra lost her daughter-in-law from her immediate vicinity; but the young princess hastened daily, with true filial love, from Strelna and Kronstadt, to embrace her, and enlivened her solitude by the freshness of her young spirit.

Political events had assumed a form connecting them closely with the family affairs of the Empress in Germany. Even the Polish war of 1831 had not so keenly or painfully affected her as this year, when

almost every newspaper brought some tidings of her widely-spread connections. Ladies of state, maids of honour, and all who make up an Empress's suite, were less available for conversation than her sons and daughters, now, alas! severed from the domestic hearth. She therefore sadly missed the youthful Alexandrina; and although the individual members of her family were all wont to assemble round her by ten o'clock in the morning, this was almost impossible in the country, owing to the great distances. The store of health that she brought with her from Palermo gradually disappeared, and in present circumstances a journey to any watering-place was impossible. A low sigh often escaped her at the changes that she and her family had seen in the world within the last ten years; for they were greater than any one could possibly have foreseen or anticipated. The Emperor's love and esteem alone remained unchanged, and this thought still cheered and supported his gradually fading consort. In those years she often remained whole days alone, stretched on a sofa, listening to reading; and when she had heard enough of the news of the day, she hastened eagerly into another sphere, enjoying rural delights in Voss's "Luise," or in the lofty gravity and sufferings of a Tasso. Nicholas came to her room, with the same tenderness as ever, when he had a few spare moments between the reports of his Ministers. If these readings took place after his return from his drives, he sometimes listened to them, and lamented being so entirely cut off from every amusement of the kind. He sought to divine and to

fulfil the slightest wish of his wife, recalling in such cases any orders that he had previously given. "What a pity that we are in the country!" said she on one occasion. "I should like to have gone to the theatre to-night." Her husband said nothing, but at eight o'clock the same evening he conducted her to the theatre, transferred to the country.

In the garden of Zarskoe-Selò the sentinels were so distributed that the autocrat, during his morning walks, could not be assailed by petitioners. And yet he observed one day that a sentry allowed two ladies to enter the gardens of the palace. In answer to the Emperor's inquiry, the man replied that these ladies wished to present a petition to the Empress. He immediately approached them with much politeness. "Whom have I the honour to address?" said he. "Princess Iwanowna O— ventures to bring a petition to her Majesty the Empress." "But could your Highness discover no other mode?" "Your Majesty," said the confused and alarmed lady, "I come from the Simbirsk government by the Neva; and for three weeks past I have adopted every possible means of obtaining an interview with her Majesty, and have failed. This is my last desperate attempt." "And what is the subject of your application?" "To obtain admission for this my daughter into one of the Imperial Institutes." "Permit me to conduct you myself to the Empress, and personally to support your request." He accordingly led both ladies through the palace to the cabinet of Alexandra, and on the way desired that the circumstances of the family should be de-

tailed to him. Arrived in the anteroom of the cabinet, he was announced, and requested to wait for a few minutes. "We have come at an inopportune moment," said he; "but I trust her Majesty will pardon us." The Empress now appeared in the anteroom, a long spacious apartment. "I hope your Majesty will forgive my audacity," said he, "but I bring you a lady who but for my intervention might possibly have been arrested; so I appeal to your kindness to receive the visit of this Princess." "Pray, come into my cabinet with these ladies," said the Empress, smiling. "Alas! I must renounce that honour, as important business awaits me. Your Majesty will therefore permit my departure, once more recommending these ladies to you. Should they have any request to make to me, I beg you will listen to it favourably in my name." Saying which, he withdrew.

Their Majesties had rarely any opportunity of catching a glimpse of the domestic life of families who lived in distant provinces in the country. As many officials were engaged in the Commission for Petitions as in any department of the Ministry, which amounted weekly to thousands; and even those laid before their Majesties for ratification could not be thoroughly examined in detail. The Emperor's business hours were apportioned to the minute during the whole year. The time of the Empress was purposely less strictly limited, and she often searched herself into the circumstances of individual families, both in town and country, relating to her husband what she had learned. Unhappily, on the throne things are too apt to be seen

with the eyes of others, till at last the doubt arises as to whom to trust. On the occasion of the Grand Duke Constantine's nuptials, Imperial mercy was to be extended to a number of prisoners in the debtors' jail. The Empress obtained the closest information as to which of these were most worthy of pardon, but heard such conflicting judgments with regard to the persons in question, that at length she did not herself know whom to recommend. She was apt to become mistrustful towards those who had possessed her confidence for years. One of the prisoners in question was passed over as unworthy, the persons round the Empress having spoken loudly against him. How indignant she felt on learning, six weeks later, that the man in question had been pronounced innocent by the tribunal itself! Now she heard from the lips of a princess not only the miserable state to which her own family was reduced, without any particular blame attaching to them, but also details about the condition of the whole province.

We must, however, return to our fair petitioners. An hour passed before the Emperor's return, when, to his astonishment, he found them still engaged in conversation. The Princess was dismissed and her petition granted. Both their Majesties heartily rejoiced when they could substantially assist any one—for most of their benefits passed through other hands—without the certainty that they had been conferred on the most worthy. An adjutant-general once brought the Emperor a petition from a family, the substance of which astonished the monarch. "Pray, how has this

family deserved such attention and such distinction?" asked he gravely; "for I never allow the slightest service to go unrewarded." "I rely on your Majesty's mercy," said the petitioner. "We all expect mercy from God," said the Emperor with a stern face; "but from me, the ruler and autocrat of the land, my subjects must only expect justice." At these words the petition was withdrawn.

In those years, when four branches of her family had established homes of their own, and only the two youngest sons still adhered to the family-tree, Alexandra daily saw a new world rise around her. All the servants who had come with her from Berlin were dead, and two of her most important officials had also, within a short space, been snatched away by death. One of these had administered the privy purse of the Imperial family with the utmost rectitude, and his death caused the Empress to shed sincere tears. "He has served us faithfully for thirty years," cried she sadly, "and it will be difficult to replace him. Go at once to the desolate mourners, obtain minute information about them, and send the eldest daughter to me." She learned every particular about the family, and provided for them handsomely. On this occasion she related an incident of the latter years of her life that seemed unprecedented, nay, impossible in Russia. An official let to a peasant a mill at Roptscha that belonged to the Empress's domain, without having named in the contract all the questions connected with usufruct. In the course of time, doubts arose as to the rights of the tenant; and as these could not be ascer-

tained, a lawsuit ensued, when the City Court of Oranienbaum decided in favour of the peasant, and against the Empress. The same official considered such a verdict impossible, in fact, utter folly, and appealed to the Court of Zarskoe-Selò, the Emperor's own particular possession. This court likewise decided against Alexandra, and the official was afraid to bring such intelligence to his august mistress. "How vexatious for an Empress," said she, "to lose a lawsuit against a peasant, just like Frederick the Great against the miller of Sans-Souci; and yet, on the other hand, how gratifying that the court should be so impartial!"

Not long after her secretary, Herr von Chambeau, also died, whose loss grieved her still more, for, at the beginning of the century, he taught the French language to the Royal family of Prussia at Königsberg, and subsequently followed Princess Charlotte to Petersburg as her secretary. This worthy man was almost painfully conscientious in his difficult post, and therefore possessed the confidence of his Imperial mistress to the fullest extent. One glance into his office sufficed to give some idea of the beneficence of the Empress. On the first of every month those poor people assembled, to whom a yearly sum was allotted by her, and indeed they came in hundreds. Chambeau calculated that two-thirds of the whole of her privy purse was devoted to the poor, and was often annoyed that the illustrious lady should think so little of herself. He once reproached her for this, and she replied,—"It is possible that I think too little about myself, but the Emperor takes more care of me than I can express." Chambeau had

several clerks in his office, whose sole business was to visit the poor, and to ascertain thoroughly their situation. Indeed the Empress's means often did not suffice, when she applied to the Emperor for a contribution from the revenues of her children. Was it the poor alone to whom she opened her benevolent hand? There were many officials who profited by her bounty on particular occasions, and many highly-born families who could only live in accordance with their elevated rank by her beneficent aid. As had ever been the case in Old Russia, the Emperor was still the source of bounty for high and low. There was a great outcry at that time, both in Russia and abroad, about the difficulties in the way of those who wished to go to watering-places, but no one referred to the fact that many sent there by physicians were provided with means for the journey by Nicholas, and that official men were not only supplied with a sum of money, but also received their salary during the whole period of their absence. Chambeau died suddenly of cholera, which, in spite of every precaution on the part of Dr. Mandt, for the first time attacked members of the Court. The Empress was quite stunned by this blow, which came so unexpectedly. The old man had gone on business from Peterhof to the town, came back ill the same evening, and died in the course of a few hours. The Emperor had conferred a piece of land on him in Peterhof, on which he had built a handsome villa, where he intended to pass the evening of his life in the quiet performance of his duties. He was buried in Peterhof, not far from his little property, and Alexandra never

failed to visit his grave as soon as she arrived in Peterhof.

The year 1849 brought more grief to the Empress than even the preceding one. In February the Russian troops entered Siebenburg, being recalled from Austria, having been at first employed against the troops of General Bem as a mere precautionary measure, though this step might easily be succeeded by an armed intervention, and thus entail a serious campaign. But even within the next few months the Austrian Empire seemed on the verge of dissolution, and the Vienna papers spoke of help from Russia. The Hungarian Revolution was attended with brilliant results, and the Emperor greatly feared that the flames of his neighbour's burning house, if not speedily extinguished, might soon spread to his own.

The Empress went to Zarskoe-Selò in May alone; Nicholas had gone to Warsaw to discuss with Francis Joseph the assistance required; Michael followed his brother thither; and Constantine, only just recovered from measles, marched with the Russian headquarters into Hungary. The eyes of the anxious mother were now perpetually turned to the seat of war, and though good news arrived almost daily, still nothing succeeded in removing her silent, unobtrusive uneasiness. When at length the intelligence arrived that her second son had become a Knight of St. George, she collected all the friends left in Peterhof at a banquet, and drank with them to the health of the young hero. One of the enemy's cannon-balls fell between him and his aide-de-camp, which in after years adorned his

writing-table as a paper-weight. All the tidings, however, that now arrived, excited fresh terror and alarm, and kept alive the inward misery of the Empress. She was pursued this summer by restlessness, and in vain sought to distract her thoughts in cheerful Peterhof. Wheresoever her eyes were directed, whether to the war in Hungary, to Prussia, to Germany and its revolutions, or to Petersburg, nowhere could she find tranquillity. She shut herself up in Znaminsky, close by Peterhof, with her friend Catherine Tiesenhausen, where she occupied herself in hearing Hoffmann, Tieck, and Zschokké's novels read aloud, and hoped by such means to attain a more cheerful mood, but in vain. A letter of the Emperor from Warsaw even expressed the fear that his intervention in Hungary would be fruitless, and that he must therefore remain longer in Warsaw; and this circumstance weighed most heavily of all on his wife's heart. When in the course of a few days a despatch of the Emperor's spoke of the subjection of Hungary, and of peace, she began to revive, and offered up a prayer of thanksgiving in the little chapel of Peterhof with her Court. Being now more cheerful, she resolved to spend a week at the sea, the weather being peculiarly favourable in this month of August, when suddenly a new cloud of sorrow gathered over the family. News came that the Grand Duke Michael, the Emperor's brother, was dangerously ill, and soon the sad tidings followed of his death. The Empress quitted Peterhof to await the arrival of her grief-stricken husband in Zarskoe-Selò. A more severe blow could scarcely have befallen him than the loss of this brother,

and at the very moment, too, that he had mastered the revolution.

This Grand Duke Michael, the youngest son of the Emperor Paul, was scarcely two years younger than the Emperor, and had shared with him the years of childhood, the school-room of Gatschina, and the first experiences of life, like Constantine with the Emperor Alexander, but their characters were more analogous than those of the two elder brothers. Michael Pawlowitsch, from his youth upwards, acknowledged superiority of intellect in his elder brother Nicholas, and reverenced him as highly as the Emperor Alexander, who was equally estranged from both. This voluntary subordination did not, however, in the slightest degree disturb the sincere feeling of friendship that linked them together.

Nicholas was, as we know, grave and formal, Michael Pawlowitsch, on the other hand, always in good humour and gay, meeting the most annoying events with a witticism. He fulfilled the duties of his service with the fidelity and conscientiousness of a subject, and, at his public appearances before soldiers and officers, he assumed his proper dignity. This same man, whom the careless officer avoided in the street, or only formally greeted in prescribed form, cherished his regiment with the heart of a father, and in his own house, and to his friends and intimates, was all heart and feeling, cheerfulness and benevolence. He was better informed than any one in the kingdom of the position and the good or bad fortune of the various officers. He supported their requests to the Emperor, rewarded and punished with

the same impartiality, and his generous hand, like that of the Empress's, was too lavish for his means. The Turkish and the Polish campaign found him as fearless in danger as on December 14th. Like the Czar, he was often to be seen in the streets of Petersburg wrapped in a soldier's cloak, walking slowly and observingly, greeted by every one with the same respect as the Emperor himself. His wit was keen, but not personally offensive, like that of Prince Menschikof. The labours of his post were not less than those of the Minister of War, and his devotion to the Czar induced him to renounce all the pleasures of life. The happiness of a son among his progeny was denied him, and of his three daughters, two had within a brief period been snatched from him by death. The nature of this worthy man since these losses had become more grave and sad, and the father and mother watched anxiously over their third and only surviving child.

Seldom did the untiring Michael grant himself a holiday by going abroad. In 1847 he had serious thoughts of passing a year in another country for the re-establishment of his health and laying aside his uniform for a black coat,—"At first," said he, "I shall look quite ridiculous in my own eyes out of uniform, but after I have worn other clothes for a month I shall rather like them. When I travel I become a private individual in every respect. I should like to move about from town to town with only one friend and one servant, without seeing one single soul of my thirty relatives in Germany; above all, I should wish to be one month in Paris, which I had only a glimpse of when young. I

would give a good deal to see a review in Paris as an unknown civilian." Such was the project that animated him in the autumn of 1847, when thunder-clouds were already gathering in the horizon of Europe. No one appreciated so highly the womanly dignity of the Empress, and her admirable influence over the Emperor, as her brother-in-law Michael, who often called her the Palladium of Russia. If the submission of Hungary was one of the greatest triumphs in the reign of the Emperor, he was at the same time assailed by the most severe blow. He returned quite another man in the autumn, and for the first time his figure was bent. In the spring no one could have believed that he was in his fifty-third year. He seemed for the last fifteen years to have remained exactly the same, majestic in his gait, the expression of his countenance open and bright; but after the death of his brother his hair suddenly became grey, and his face deeply furrowed. On arriving at his quiet country palace he continued long speechless in the arms of his wife, and tears came to his eyes when, in the course of business, anything recalled his deceased brother.

The Grand Duchess Helene also, whose intellect was quite masculine, and who had hitherto looked so young and handsome, could not withstand the sorrow of so many losses, and became deeply dejected. In the society of her youngest daughter she passed a solitary winter in the large and now deserted palace, formerly frequented daily by hundreds of officers and generals. She was not fettered by so many oppressive considerations as the Empress in the Winter Palace, and she

always contrived to amuse her leisure hours. Her house and her *salon* were entirely separate from that of her husband, who devoted himself exclusively to his official duties, while his wife received both at dinner and in the evenings not only the representatives of all the branches of Russian life, but distinguished foreigners, travellers, artists, and *savans* in Petersburg, who were all welcomed by her. The Academician, Von Baer, father of the new system of physiology; Count Kayserling, celebrated as a geologist, found a regular place at her table and her soirées; Count Bloudof was a staunch friend of the family; and she was also intimate with the most conspicuous foreign and scientific men and statesmen. The tone of conversation in her *salon* was more free, nay, more philosophical, than that usually adopted in the Winter Palace, whereas now this august lady was long invisible to the public in her just grief, and only her most intimate family friends could venture to approach her.

Since her return from Palermo the Empress had met with more sorrows than the human heart could almost endure; the whole of Europe, and especially Germany, her home, the Royal House and Berlin, were entirely changed, and deep grief gnawed at her heart. The policy of Russia became daily more estranged from that of foreign countries, and what had hitherto subsisted in the best harmony was now hopelessly shattered and rent asunder. One day she said, "Napoleon prophesied for the middle of this century a republican Europe, or a Cossack one: everything indeed is metamorphosed, but neither of his prophecies has been fulfilled, and amid

all these changes I see neither greater wisdom nor greater happiness. Misfortune, too, has not spared the good Madame Rossi either. She has lost her fortune, and her husband his embassy, and now she must return to the stage to toil for daily bread." She was not only deeply affected by the changes which had befallen many of her royal relatives, but bestowed her heartfelt sympathy on those whom she had known.

The Emperor had been gradually persuaded that the root of all revolutions was to be found in the Universities, and this new idea was encouraged in him by a Mecklenburger at that time living in Petersburg. He showed serious indications of wishing entirely to abolish these centres of revolution. Two persons opposed these views decidedly—the Empress and Count Nesselrode. The notorious Bakunin at that time loudly proclaimed before the tribunals in Russia that in German Universities regicide was openly advocated; and by so doing escaped death. Astonished and indignant as the Emperor was at this statement, he listened to two other men who had studied at the Berlin University, and came to the conclusion that Bakunin merely wished to save his life by this falsehood.

For five-and-twenty years Nicholas had lived in the conviction that his ruling system was the only one suitable for Russia, and the events and rapid changes and transformations in the whole of the rest of Europe only tended to confirm his former opinions. There were, indeed, a handful of young people at that time in Petersburg, who, like the conspirators of December 14, cherished certain chimeras of the brain, but they were

arrested by a watchful Government, and thus rendered innocuous. The interior calm of Russia, the solidity of the Emperor's rule, excited even in foreign countries amazement in the most opposite parties. As the restoration of the German Empire was at that time the chief topic of the day, the wish was not unfrequently expressed in certain circles, "If it be so, let us have our own Cæsar;" to which an intelligent patriot quaintly replied, "At all events let him be previously translated into German." At an epoch when in Germany so much was abolished and so little created, the Emperor surprised his people by the opening of the new railway from Petersburg to Moscow, by the permanent bridge across the Neva, which justly deserves to be called the finest in Europe, and the splendid structure of the new palace in the Kremlin; the Temple of the Muses of the Hermitage; the Isaak's Church, the building of which commenced with his reign; but most of all by the quiet unpretentious manner in which he celebrated his twenty-fifth jubilee, not with pomp, but with gratitude to God; the feeling of his domestic happiness outweighing all the rest. Many of his ministers and adjutant-generals were gone to their long home, others were weak and decrepit; old Prince Wolkonsky lived in retirement; Prince Tschernischef was ill, and no longer capable of work—a living corpse; only three men in his kingdom stood vigorous and unaltered by his side—the Chancellor Nesselrode, Count Orlof, and one of his oldest and most intimate friends, Count Adlerberg. But the changes in his own family were the most striking; he had been robbed by death of a daughter, a brother, two

nieces, and a grandchild, and fate seemed to threaten the life of two others dear to him. His son-in-law, the Duke of Leuchtenberg, was seeking health in Egypt and Madeira, and his youngest daughter-in-law, Alexandra Josephowna, was the object of a serious medical consultation. Although the last few years had in some degree bowed down the Czar, still he showed wonderful strength compared with his contemporaries, and at that time visited the suffering Dr. Mandt, who had been confined to bed for weeks from an injury to his knee. During a review the Emperor and his charger fell, but he quickly remounted, and stayed three hours longer in pouring rain, discharging his duties, afterwards attended mass in his dripping clothes, and finally paid a visit to his invalid physician. "One cripple comes to see another," said he; "I also had a tumble, but have no time to take care of myself." The Doctor was alarmed when he examined the injury, and ordered his august patient to stay in his room for a week to effect a cure." "Thank you, very much," replied the Emperor, "but unluckily I have no time to attend to your advice." For the next few days he went limping about the Zarskoe Palace, and met with one of his retinue, who was suffering from toothache. "Very sorry," said he, "but do as I do, don't think about it."

Grave as was his aspect when engaged on business in his cabinet, he was all the more cheerful at home. He knew exactly when to adopt a dignified majestic bearing, and when a milder, nay a cordial, glance would be in place. On the whole, Nicholas in his conduct towards others was not more severe than towards him-

self, and on more than one occasion, when owing to false information he loudly blamed the wrong person, he eagerly implored forgiveness. It was neither monotony nor tedious formality, nor the pressure of never-ending business that caused the furrows on his brow; it was the abuses and evasions of his will, and secret opposition, that excited his just indignation, and caused him sometimes to remain for days in a state of irritability. His confidence was often abused in the most shameful manner. For a journey of his three daughters from Moscow to Petersburg he was charged with a sum large enough to have maintained several regiments for a whole year. In great wrath he wished to enter into a strict investigation, but softened down, and said, "We shall never find the guilty, and perhaps punish the innocent. This account shall serve as a proof to posterity, that in one week my daughters eat as much as two regiments in a year." Affairs of this kind annoyed him only too often; indeed he was not unfrequently obliged to withdraw his trust from people who had possessed it for many years. The forbearance was in fact much to be admired that induced him to exercise mercy instead of insisting on his rights, and the rapidity with which he controlled his greatest excitement, and the benevolence ever ready to assist others and to reward services. He saw an officer in full gallop on the street, contrary to Russian military law, he stopped him, and said,—

"Why such haste?"

"My wife is ill in child-birth, and I am in search of a doctor," said the startled officer.

"Go then, and take my best wishes."

So saying he dismissed him after learning his name. In the course of the day the Emperor ascertained the circumstances of this officer, and next morning sent a *feldjäger* with a godfather's gift. One day he saw an adjutant-general coming towards the Anitschkow Palace on foot, and expressed his surprise. On the latter simply pleading poverty, the Emperor first gave him a carriage and horses, and as he persisted on coming on foot, not being able to keep an equipage on his present income, the Czar doubled his salary. One day, at eight o'clock in the morning, he took a walk in the town, and chose for his egress from the palace the stairs that led to the apartments of the heir-apparent. He often met there a Court official, who daily repaired to his occupation in the palace at the same moment and on the same steps. The latter was very careful to attract the attention of the Emperor by his punctuality, but sometimes missed him by a minute. When they again met on the same spot the Emperor asked,—

"Which of us is wrong in having missed each other?"

"Watches differ, your Majesty," said the official.

"Then, pray excuse me for coming too late; I must improve."

Particular events caused him to be out of humour for days, so much so that even in his own family no one would venture on such occasions to make any representations to him; but as soon as he was informed that the cause of his anger was owing to a mistake, he instantly resumed his usual cheerful tone. At an

exhibition of art he saw a picture by a young Russian painter, specially patronized by him, and purchased it at a high price. The teacher of this artist was a Frenchman, employed by the Emperor in the Hermitage, so he told him that he had bought the work of his pupil. The Frenchman, impelled by envy and malice, impressed the Emperor with the idea that the greater part of the picture was composed by himself, and only copied by his pupil. Indignant at such a fraud, Nicholas caused his displeasure to fall to the heaviest degree on the young painter, and no one ventured to find out whether justly or unjustly. One day an unassuming little man appeared before the angry autocrat, and addressed him in a tone of freedom that scarcely another sovereign would have ventured to employ, and explained the affair in its true light. This was the Cabinet painter, Sauerweid, whom the Emperor had known from his youth upwards to be a truth-loving man. The mighty ruler thanked him for his intervention, restored the young man to favour, and sent his calumniator beyond the boundaries. His vast public energies, his grand virtues as a ruler, eclipsed, as it were, a number of traits that emanated from the inner spirit of the man, and which proved his heart to be as lofty as his intellect. These seldom found their way to the public ear, so they never could appear in the estimate of his character. The newspapers, indeed, announced public Government acts and ukases distributions of orders and promotions; they thus brought forward the all-powerful Autocrat, but never the private individual in his domestic life.

His aphorism is well known, that the strength of a State consists in the unity of its laws, speech, and religion, which never, however, formed a basis for his government; blind zeal on the part of subservient and powerful officials, who wished always to play into the hands of the Czar, proclaimed this view of his to be the ground-work of his rule, but in his own mind this never became conviction as a rule of conduct. At the very same time that Nicholas uttered this maxim, many foreigners of their own accord became Russian subjects without the Emperor's knowledge or wish, and when one of these spoke of Russia as his new fatherland, he checked him by saying, "You are, and ever will be, a foreigner, though in my service." In the same way many Protestants adopted the faith of the Greek Church, but whether Nicholas was aware of this we know not. But we do know that the following incident is a fact:—A young man was educated with the young Constantine, whose mother informed the Emperor that her son, fifteen years old, wished from conviction to embrace the Greek faith. "A lad of fifteen has no convictions, Madame," was the Emperor's reply. "I have no power to prevent you and your son joining another Church, but it is contrary to my wish." The mother thought that she had spoken to Nicholas at an unpropitious moment, and pursued her purpose in silence. At length the day and hour arrived when the reception of the youth into the Greek Church was to take place within the palace itself. When the Emperor heard of it he declined the office of godfather, and left the palace during the sacred ceremony for the day.

The Emperor's political views and maxims of government did not change with time, and equally warm and tender did his heart remain towards family life and domestic joys. He could now number as many grandchildren as children twenty years previously, and although his time was as limited as formerly, still he saw them all at least once a day in the Winter Palace, or in that of the Grand Duchess Marie. His tenderness towards his wife in her daily failing health was always the same, and his only moments of leisure and enjoyment were passed with her. Her debility increased so gradually that she was seldom seen in public, and, when able to drive out, it was in a close carriage. The events of latter years had entirely disordered her nerves, and she was obliged to devolve the duty of visiting the different Institutes on her daughter and daughter-in-law. During Easter she had hitherto regularly attended the examinations and dismissals at Smolna, but this being now impossible, the Emperor caused the pupils to come to the Winter Palace, and the female scholars carried with them the blessing of the Empress into the world they were about to enter. The domestic life of the throne inspired a new spirit in all families in the capital and in the country; and the beginning of this century was, in this respect, differently constituted from the middle of it. A great dignitary said at that time, in 1850, "The Emperor has conferred everything on me that a loyal servant of the State could receive; besides the rank of Prince, he has honoured me with all the decorations and ribbons of his realm, and I am grateful to him, but most of all for

having taught me that family happiness is the highest, if not the only true felicity on earth." The Emperor remarked and disapproved of any deviations from the good customs that reigned in his own family, but he was also willing to aid those who wished to establish a home of their own, indeed he favoured their promotion in his service. Christmas Eve, even in the latter years of the Imperial family, always found them assembled round a Christmas tree; indeed, in the palace for weeks previously, its embellishments were prepared, and many families who celebrated this evening at home were suddenly surprised by an Imperial gift. In fact, notwithstanding the immeasurable elevation and power that seemed to divide them from city and country, the Imperial family were far more closely connected with their people than the most petty German prince with his subjects.

CHAPTER IX.

CLOSE OF THE EMPEROR'S LIFE.

In the year 1851 the political influence and power of the Emperor attained a height that no monarch in the century, Napoleon alone excepted, ever reached. Peace seemed as permanently restored to Europe as in the years 1834-40. A quiet triumph, which they shared with their sovereign, could be descried in the features of the higher classes in Petersburg. Another tone pervaded society, who began to praise loudly all that they had formerly secretly blamed. The noble, calm expression of the Emperor's countenance was restored, and he moved about with the same majesty as previous to the revolutionary year. The Empress, too, in spite of her indifferent health, seemed to revive, and drove constantly about the country in an open calèche. In Peterhof, too, with the finest possible weather, former splendours and domestic happiness returned; the Grand Duchess Olga came thither, and also the Hereditary Grand Duke of Weimar, with his wife. On the 25th June, the Emperor's birthday, contrary to the precedent of earlier years, a grand gala banquet was held in the palace, at which the Imperial family appeared; on July 11, the name-day of the fair Olga, there was a superb illu-

mination in the gardens, and the ballet of "Ondine" performed by daylight on the water. This country town, and the palace of Peter the Great, had been so embellished in the course of five-and-twenty years, and adorned with so many precious souvenirs, that those inhabitants of Petersburg who had not seen it for a succession of years did not recognise it again, and strangers thought it unequalled in Europe. The Emperor, in this immense mass of buildings, had thought impartially of every one, first, of course, of his wife and family, but also of the reception of foreign princes, and his ministers, generals, and aides-de-camp; provision was even made for visitors from the capital, in fact the Autocrat had forgotten no one, save himself. The little private Alexandria house in the park remained exactly the same as when built a generation ago; it was still the sanctuary of his family, into which no one arriving on business with the Emperor ever entered. Like all other officials, Nicholas drove every morning to the palace, where he received his ministers, without granting himself the rest and ease to which every other prince, indeed every minister, thought himself entitled. Peterhof was peculiarly dear to him, from the memories of the thirty years when his whole family, still unsevered, lived there. Here the most distinguished man in Europe, and the most powerful in the world, conducted the regiment of the Chevalier Guards (whose chief was the Empress herself) past the illustrious lady, who, with her ladies, on the balcony, looked with interest at this military spectacle. Here too he drove his consort and all his family slowly in a landau through the park,

the paths of which he had himself designed; here he was to be seen in the evening, surrounded by the most motley crowd; listening to music, and dispensing with all marks of respect to his person; and here he often lingered in the English park at night, listening to the nightingales. The Anitschkow Palace in the town witnessed his happy days when Grand Duke, and Peterhof when he became Emperor. Both he and Alexandra longed for this retreat, as slaves do for liberty.

In the year 1851, scarcely a trace was outwardly perceptible of the storms that, two years previously, raged through all Europe, and also through the soul of the Emperor; like the new Winter Palace, everything appeared to be thoroughly restored. Dr. Mandt alone seemed under no delusion about the health of his master. One day Mandt appeared in society with a very grave countenance, and when questioned as to the cause of his depression, he answered as follows:—"Science is capable of long preserving a feeble constitution like that of the Empress, and, moreover, the singular serenity of mind she enjoys is her best medicine; she requires from time to time some restorative—baths, change of air for a few months, and then her health is re-established for some years. But the Emperor's state begins to rack my brains far more; a little oversight on my part might entail worse consequences than the loss of a great battle." He was urged to explain himself more clearly, but the cautious physician entered into no further discussion on the subject. Many other persons besides Mandt had opportunities of seeing the Emperor in a small circle, and of observing his ways, and these too remarked many

changes in him. When in good humour he invariably spoke Latin to certain persons of his suite, and continued to converse with them till their classical stock became exhausted, when, laughing heartily, he walked away. This custom was now seldom followed, indeed, seemed to have entirely ceased. In social intercourse the repose was now missed with which he, in the most good-humoured way, suffered people to build up a mountain of contradictions, in order to blow them down with a breath, like a house of cards. In his solitary walks in Peterhof and Zarskoe-Selò, he sometimes spoke aloud,—a new habit, arising from the different mood within. The tone of his conversation became more quickly irritable and impetuous than formerly; in short, there were indications enough to a sharp-sighted physician that his nature, once firm as a rock, was no longer the same, especially since the death of his brother Michael; all found him altered in appearance since then, but not more than his years warranted. A servant of the State, in a high position, and near the person of the Emperor, requested his dismissal. "Rest when and how you will, but we must take leave together of the service," said he. The European public, at that time, never showed such sympathy towards any ruler personally as to the Emperor Nicholas; when he only passed cursorily through Germany in 1852, hundreds of thousands flocked together, out of curiosity, to see him, and his every greeting was cherished as a memory for life. The admiration of his noble appearance was, on this occasion, even exceeded by the respect paid to his qualities as a ruler. In Germany they had often

seen him, but heard little of him; scarcely did any newspaper take the trouble to allude to Russia in its columns, and if the Emperor's name chanced to be mentioned, it was always accompanied by a falsehood, a calumny, or a misrepresentation. Now, they were justly eager to see the man who alone, in the overthrow of the European world, had stood firm as a column of granite, this being, at all events, a fact as clear as day to all. Gloomy rumours yielded to truth; envy and hatred were silenced, and the universal reverence of all parties was declared openly and candidly. In Dresden, where fugitive Poles for twenty years kindled and sustained open hatred against him, he was now regarded as a divinity. He examined the new iron railway bridge with the eyes of a connoisseur, and his questions astonished those who accompanied him, and no one was oppressed by his presence. He would have rejoiced to have transferred the Sistine Madonna to his Hermitage collection, for he considered it Raphael's finest work. In that year the new Hermitage was opened, the most splendid temple of art now in Europe, but the Emperor felt that to these treasures a master-work of Raphael's and of Correggio's was wanting. During his reign he could not satisfy his love for the plastic arts, like King Ludwig the First of Bavaria, and yet he had not done less for Petersburg than the latter for Munich. This, however, remained unknown to the European public, and yet all the buildings and works of art in Munich did not cost so much as the rebuilding of the Winter Palace alone. King Ludwig was not only fortunate in the peace that prevailed in Germany for half a century, but also in

many other circumstances that did not favour the Emperor, though it is by no means our intention to depreciate the art-loving King Ludwig. It was said by the Romans of the Emperor Augustus, that he found the city wood, and left it marble and gold. And, in truth, Petersburg, at Nicholas's accession to the throne, counted more wooden than stone houses; and one of his first laws was that buildings were henceforth to be of stone, and all plans for building to be first submitted through the minister to himself. The original plan of the city was not thus altered, but gradually embellished. The first great monument, after the Emperor's own design, was the Alexander column to the memory of his brother; the largest monolith in the whole of Europe. No memorial of ancient or modern times can be compared with this work. Shortly after followed the consecration of the new church of the Smolna Institute, in its sublime simplicity; and also the Church of the Trinity, with its blue starry cupola, which, in front of the Isaac Church, serves as the first beacon of the capital to those coming from Cronstadt. The Emperor also adorned the city with four theatres, one of which was named "The Alexandra," in honour of the Empress, and another "The Michael," after his brother. In no capital have artists and actors been more liberally dealt with than by Nicholas, for, after ten or twelve years' service, he bestowed on them a pension for life from his own privy purse. The Italian opera-singers were the same who played alternately in London and in Paris; and they openly said, that, in spite of the inclemency of the climate, they went to Petersburg with the greatest de-

light, because there they were personally more distinguished, both by the Court and the capital, than on the banks of the Thames. The Emperor had already provided for the enrichment of the Hermitage, before this new and superb building was completed. His Italian journey produced great masterpieces, especially of the Italian schools; but he also secured for the Hermitage the Raphael, called the Madonna of the Duke of Alba, and the Empress brought with her from Florence a youthful work of the same master. The Emperor bestowed great care on the Academy of Painting, and this art soared highest during his reign. We know of no gallery in Germany that can boast of a hall so richly adorned with national works of the present day, as the New Hermitage. Bronze statues also made an important beginning here. A young artillery officer, Baron Klodt, was requested by the Emperor to give up his profession, in order to cultivate his dormant talent, and the Anitschkow bridge was adorned by this artist with the "Horse-tamers." Petersburg witnessed the building of the Maria and Nicholas Palaces, and various barracks in the antique style; we must not forget, moreover, the new Observatory, and its present enormous refractor. But the three most important and incomparable memorials of his reign are the Isaac Church, the bridge over the Neva, and the New Palace in the Kremlin, in Moscow, inaugurated Easter 1849, and inhabited for the first time at that period by the Court. The above-named works can well stand a comparison with those of Munich; in the New Hermitage are combined the Glyptothek and the

Pinakothek; the colossal statue of Bavaria is not so unique of its kind as the Alexander Pillar; the theatres in both places are suitable for their purpose, but the three last-named works can find their parallels at most in ancient Rome. They are works such as once on a time were produced by German imperial cities in the course of several centuries, called forth in one country, however, by the Czar's despotic power, in the course of ten years. The Isaac Church, surrounded by hundreds of granite pillars, as close to the Neva as the Sophia Church to the Golden Horn, replaces the former edifice, a symbol of the faith of the orthodox Greek Church as splendid as that of St. Peter's at Rome. This structure is not of the same magnitude or height as St. Peter's, but the impression on the spectator is not less forcible. Its golden cupola towers over the whole city, and shines above the sea as far as Cronstadt. The Emperor did not live to see its consecration, which did not take place till three years after his death, but he watched with delight the endless scaffoldings gradually disappear, and the whole building disclosed in all its majesty; he both walked and drove, however, over the New Bridge, and has earned by this benefit the gratitude of his capital. This bridge also was completed within ten years, and owing to it Petersburg is now become one united city, whereas it formerly consisted of individual and separate portions. The bridges that Europe can boast of, all sink into insignificance beside this one, except, indeed, the Menai Bridge in England, and the Emperor might justly have said, like Justinian,—"At last I have surpassed you all." He also was present at

the inauguration of the Kremlin Palace, and modestly called it the second in Europe, placing the English Houses of Parliament above it. The latter are of vast extent, but the apartments inferior in splendour to those of the Russian Kremlin Palace. The Winter Palace, year after year, is the usual abode of the Imperial family, the building at Moscow is the Festival Palace of the kingdom, and numbers as many richly decorated apartments as there are orders in the realm. Notwithstanding its enormous size, their Majesties live there in a very unpretending manner, in order that domestic life should not be sacrificed to festivities.

The construction of the railway between the two capitals encountered difficulties from which any other country would have shrunk in dismay; but they were overcome, and the Emperor opened it himself. The monuments we have mentioned will best demonstrate to posterity the value of this sovereign's reign. Five-and-twenty years here embrace more than a century of history. These buildings are not the productions of vanity, like those of Hadrian, but manifestos of popular and State life developed under his rule. As in this year a quarter of a century had elapsed since his coronation, a grand festival was expected, when a minister ventured to ask a question on the subject, Nicholas replied, "I mean to take you all by surprise." A general promotion and distribution of ribbons and orders were therefore expected; but the monarch did indeed surprise the public by passing this day in retirement and seclusion, though full of gratitude to God. Among the emperors of ancient Rome, not

one can be compared with Nicholas. His chivalrous, straightforward character, and his happy domestic life, stand out in the sharpest contrast to Augustus Octavius, and yet the same words are applicable to him that Horace once addressed to that ruler, "Thou alone canst bear such burdens, thou shieldest Italy by the power of thy weapons, thou ennoblest the morals of the land, and purifiest it by laws." These words apply far more to Nicholas's reign than to that of the hypocritical Roman. Of all the rare and great gifts that monarch possessed, the family life he established confers on him the highest splendour, for by this, more than by lawgiving, did he purify the morals of his capital and his country. Before his ascension to the throne, people spoke of imperial persons individually, but never of a family; whereas all that was seen and heard on this subject found sympathy and imitation in every family. Nicholas knew the wants of his people, and his reign shielded the land, as the chalice protects the flowery bud, that it may not prematurely burst into the light of day.

In 1852, the Empress visited Germany for the first time since her journey to Italy, and after having embraced her own relations in Potsdam, went to Schlangenbad. Her quiet visit to that cloister-like, retired watering-place, and its delightful scenery, were very beneficial to her. Here was no noisy, importunate society, but the calm enjoyment of nature, that she so dearly loved. A modest Swiss cottage was built in all haste, on a gentle acclivity overlooking the peaceful valley; here she often sat in the forenoons with her

relations, gazing with delight at the woods and meadows. After a long space of time, she once more saw Princess Lieven, who after the revolution left Paris and went to Brussels. In Germany the most extraordinary conceptions and reports prevailed about this talented lady, which indeed are explained by her having, during forty years, seldom visited a German watering-place, and only for a brief period, when she associated exclusively with the diplomatic corps; this was sufficient for the newspapers to ascribe to her a political mission. Wherever she appeared secret conferences were believed in, and the formation of political plans in the name of the Emperor. Her acquaintance was universally sought, of which, however, she was very chary. Among the diplomatists it was the prevailing fashion to frequent her *salon*, and she was called the Queen of Politics. According to the newspapers, Schlangenbad was now the seat of a secret meeting between the Empress and the Princess, and any one who passed the two ladies on the Promenade, and caught any fragments of their conversation, believed they had found the key of the mystery. The political mission of the Princess, the testament of Peter the Great, and the sea-serpent, command the same degree of belief. During the seventeen years of her absence from Petersburg, the Princess had indeed written regularly to the Empress, but the events of so many years leave ample space for verbal communications, and her august friend could scarcely be more wittily entertained. The Princess had as much to learn from the lips of Alexandra about Petersburg, as the latter about Paris. The Empress took cordial interest

in the fate of the Duchess of Orleans, and no one could relate more on this subject than the Princess, who gave a masterly delineation of the highest Parisian society, being well versed in the knowledge and details of the condition of France, and thus the pictures she drew could not fail to be of the highest interest to the Empress. Princess Lieven only spoke French, and her conversation, in brevity and terseness of expression, recalled that of Madame de Staël. All these qualities of this superior woman were well known to the Emperor, but this would not have induced him to intrust her with a political mission. In addition to the Princess were other equally clever women—Princess William of Prussia and Princess Charles, and three of her brothers were also at Schlangenbad, and likewise the Duke of Leuchtenberg, Baron Meyendorf, and Prince Alexander Gortschakof, so that besides her blood relations the Empress lived here with those akin to her in heart and spirit. In spite of her weakness, she passed these few weeks in great tranquillity of mind and with comfort; this period was, without her being aware of it, the calm, peaceful evening of her life, in which many of her innocent pleasures were restored. In the same year occurred the majority of her youngest son, Michael; like the Empress Maria Feodorowna, she had presented the Empire with four sons, who bore the same names in succession as the previous generation, and she saw with gratitude that all were in good health. The mild evening of her fertile life had arrived, when the sun, already declining, sheds its parting rays once more brightly to warm the earth. We can reckon with pre-

cision the minute when it will dip below the horizon, but we do not note the moment, and enjoy in the most profound repose its blessed influences, nor do we remark till it is actually set the obscurity and cool evening air that surround us. We part from the sunshine of nature with the sure consolation that we shall see her again on the morrow. But no one can tell when the sun of our limited being will set; the days of the Emperor were from this date numbered, and the brilliancy of his life and his power were to pass away more rapidly than he or his loving consort anticipated. When the star of his fame was in its zenith, the distant clouds that were to cause its eclipse were already gathering above the horizon.

In many circles in Petersburg the idea prevailed that Nicholas never shared the cares of his Government with his wife, solely, however, from tenderness, and the wish not to injure her health. In fact he always spared his consort any intelligence that could cause her a sudden shock. Once, in the midst of a concert, when called away by a conflagration that he wished to conceal from his wife, he ordered the different pieces to be repeated until he returned, and thus the august lady did not hear of the fire till it was extinguished. This Petersburg axiom might also be founded on the fact that in the society of the Imperial family the conversation never turned on politics,—a subject on which the Empress specially avoided expressing her opinions. So long as she was living in the Anitschkow Palace as Grand Duchess, politics, according to her own assurance, possessed less interest for her than those

topics which exclusively interest the young. When presently she had maternal duties to perform, as at the time of the Polish war and the cholera, it was strictly prohibited to convey to her any exciting intelligence. After that period her sympathies became more extended, and most of all when her brother, King Frederick William the Fourth, ascended the throne of Prussia. When her daughter Alexandra was about to form a matrimonial connexion in Denmark, she studied with her the history, the laws, and the social circumstances of that country; she obtained information about the Schleswig-Holstein question from its code of laws, which she desired the Prussian Ambassador, Herr von Rochow, to send to her. All that inwardly grieved the Emperor was thoroughly understood and shared by her, although her views and his own were seldom in unison.

The journey of Prince Menschikof to Constantinople remained a mystery in Petersburg, so far at least as its object was concerned, even in the highest classes of society. When that witty statesman was questioned on the subject, he answered his object was to bring about an alliance between a daughter of the Sultan and a young Russian Prince. The attention of the European public, after a short time, was much more directed to the Prince's *paletot* than to his mission. This latter was falsely interpreted, and the *paletot* (at least so said the diplomatist's suite) a newspaper invention; even after the departure of Prince Menschikof, and when the French and English fleet arrived in the Brescia Bay, and the Turks were busily arming, a war with the powers of the West

was in Petersburg utterly disbelieved. The Emperor went to Olmütz and to Berlin (for the last time), believing that he had done all on his side to maintain peace, but the Turkish preparations continued, and on October 4th war was publicly declared. The same German nation who formerly expressed in every theatre their hatred of the Turks, and had shown a degree of interest in the oppressed Greeks that evidently had only been all froth and foam, now became enthusiastic friends of the Turks, while hatred and enmity towards Russia became the prevailing fashion. In order to disseminate this hatred as widely as possible, the newspapers continually alluded to the testament of Peter the Great, who had imposed on his successors, as a sacred duty, the conquest of Constantinople. While the Emperor only wished to remind the Sultan that, since the treaty of Kutschuk-Kainardschi, the office of Protector and shield of the Greek Church in Turkey devolved rightfully on the Empress Catherine. The effeminate but good-natured Abdul Medschid, so far from denying this to the Russian ambassador, on the contrary instantly renewed the treaty in a firman.

After the departure of the Russian ambassador, France and England demanded menacingly the withdrawal of this firman, and as the Sultan was weak enough to comply with their demand, Prince Menschikof appeared with threats on the part of Russia. The Turkish ministers endeavouring to protract the affair, the Russian Prince took his departure without having gained his object, and shortly afterwards the Emperor occupied the Danubian Principalities. Thus a suffi-

cient pretext, though not a satisfactory cause, was found by the Western Powers for a war with Russia. Thus Nicholas, in the evening of his life, found himself involved in a war of greater magnitude than he had ever before encountered, having incurred the hatred of many who a year previously looked up to him with admiration and praise. This, however, did not affect him at all painfully; the admiration or the hatred of misjudging masses had always been indifferent to him. But to the delusions as to his good fortune in war were added disappointments about persons that he would have considered impossible. It was a most grievous and anxious time for the Emperor, and his sole happiness was to find in his cabinet, and in the heart of his wife, sympathy, a few moments of repose, and entire comprehension of his position. It is not necessary here to describe the course of events, so well known to all. For those who to this day believe in great progress of conquest on the part of the Emperor, we shall quote a passage from him to Napoleon, which gives the most simple explanation of his true designs:—"I have made all the formal and essential concessions for the maintenance of peace that my honour permits, and while I demand for my co-religionists in Turkey the confirmation of those rights and privileges long ago (1774) purchased for them by Russian blood, I ask nothing that is not their due by treaty." The true extent of the Russian demands was magnified, nay, exaggerated, in the most monstrous manner; and the language and high-sounding phrases of every country truly aggravating. An English minister called the

battle of Sinope a horrible human butchery. When the lion devours a roe the tiger calls it brutal, because he cannot himself help to consume it. Since the year 1845, when the Grand Duke Constantine visited Turkey, the capital, and the Sultan, as a young naval officer, the Emperor might easily have conquered Stamboul had he wished to make conquests at all. Six hundred thousand Greeks were at that time prepared, on his entrance into the Sophia Church, to plant the cross on its dome. The Patriarch Constantinos, banished to the Prince Islands, hoped, in spite of his advanced age, yet to hear this intelligence. The Greek nation expressed their hopes and wishes, both in speaking and writing, and one sign from young Constantine would have sufficed to transfer the throne of the Osmanlis from Europe to Asia. The Emperor had given the strictest orders to his son and his suite to listen to no overtures, to accept no invitation, to receive no deputation, but merely to pay a visit of courtesy, as a travelling prince, to the Sultan, who, at his grand banquet, surrounded by all his dignitaries of the Porte, and the whole diplomatic corps, drank to the continuance of friendly relations between the two Courts and kingdoms, to which all Europe assented by its representatives. Sir Stratford Canning alone could not conceal England's ill-will, and drank to the independence of the Porte, but without naming the rest of Europe.

In spite of a friendly understanding, the mountaineers of the Caucasus of Turkey were secretly provided with English arms, and fugitive sailors from Russian ships were speedily converted in Turkey to Islamism, so that

they could not be delivered up, and were received with open arms by the heads of the Hungarian revolution in Turkey, and protected against Russia. Nicholas bore all this with forbearance, which, however, was exhausted when a promise solemnly given to his embassy was not performed, and after the departure of Prince Menschikof every evasion and sophism was resorted to in order to excuse such conduct. Thus more than one worm gnawed at the Emperor's giant strength since the death of his brother Michael, although his outward grandeur was as great as before. Not one piece of intelligence, so long as the war was confined to the Danube, was satisfactory, far less joyful or exhilarating; men fell there whom he personally knew and valued. Not only was his mind on the stretch day and night: his noble heart endured one grief after another. The son of his friend Count Orlof was wounded thirteen times, and lost an eye; in the midst of these disquieting affairs Nicholas wrote a letter to the mother of the young man. He found time to visit those families whose sons had fallen, or been wounded, and if he had not leisure to do so, he sent one of his sons in his stead. But the most painful of all trials was that of 1854, when he discovered that the grand structure on which he had bestowed thirty years of intense zeal was made of materials neither durable nor sure. On one occasion, close to the capital, he by chance discovered three regiments so neglected that he deprived the general of his command; and the cash-box for invalided soldiers, in spite of the superintendence of several adjutant-

generals, was found empty. No unfortunate war was therefore required to irritate him to the uttermost. "Sleep has fled from me for months," said he to a foreign ambassador, "and I see the night of the future looming black before me." "Because your Imperial Majesty keeps your eyes open at night instead of sleeping," answered the foreigner. "But during the day I see things in even a more gloomy light." These words plainly show what his inmost feelings were, and yet this was said even before the Crimean War. The Imperial family were in Gatschina when the foreign telegraphs brought the news of the defeat of his troops at the Alma. He said he would not believe it, till a Russian courier from the battle-field confirmed it. Several painful days passed before a telegram arrived from Moscow to say that an express messenger was on his way. He was ordered to come direct to Gatschina, where he did not arrive till after twenty hours of tantalizing delay. He was without any written information, and charged to report to Nicholas what he had himself seen, as aide-de-camp to Prince Menschikof. The Emperor continued standing, motionless as a pillar, during this verbal report, though agony of mind was burning him like fire. "Have I heard rightly?" said he at length; "are Russian troops defeated, and have they fled before the enemy?" "It is so, your Majesty," said the aide-de-camp. (Foreign newspapers afterwards stated impartially that the Russian troops retreated in the greatest order, and not in panic flight.) The Emperor dismissed the aide-de-camp kindly, and went to his wife, who, with wonderful composure, bore

the half of his sorrow. Immediately afterwards, false intelligence was spread through Europe that, three days after the battle of the Alma, Sebastopol had been taken and the Russian fleet sunk. This newspaper *canard*, or perhaps stock-jobbing speculation, was called "the Tatar Post," because a Tatar brought it into Turkey. The same day, too, there was a rumour in Europe that the army of Prince Menschikof had sat down in Sebastopol, and fortified it. This was not, however, credited by those of the public whose enmity to their sovereign made them already rejoice; indeed, from the Burg at Vienna, the most cordial congratulations were brought to the Western Powers by the electric wires at this victory. With what scorn must the Emperor, besieged by misfortune, look down on an ungrateful world, now so malicious and so cowardly, and who so short a time previously had implored his assistance. That Sebastopol was not taken was confirmed, but the Tatars of the Crimea, who were supposed to be a down-right honest people, acted in a treacherous manner towards Russia. No wonder! when the Bible-distributing English, these travelling emissaries of Christendom, and the people of the Christian French King, fought for Islam, why should not the Tatars, who had already sworn allegiance to the standard of the Prophet, transfer themselves to their camp? The peninsula of the Taurid was at that time, even in erudite Germany, a totally unknown district, not because it lies so far away, but from its belonging to Russia. Maps innumerable suddenly appeared of this fairy land, and people traced on them the progress of the fatal war, like a game on a chess board. Every-

where the approaching fall of Sebastopol was prophesied, and the equally sure one of Cronstadt in the spring. At the beginning of the year 1855, the Emperor found himself deserted by the whole world, and the suffering Empress confessed that the autumn of her life was threatened with storms as violent as those of her childhood. Her second son, Constantine, was more in Cronstadt than at Petersburg, while the two younger had gone to the seat of war after the battle of the Alma. The Duke of Leuchtenberg had been dead for two years, so she was now chiefly surrounded by her young grandchildren, and therefore by a new world. Her eyes were weaker, and for some time loss of sight was apprehended. The friend of her youth also, Cecilia Baroness Frederiks, was dead, and now more than ever she required a steadfast friend, as her enfeebled sight did not admit of her reading or writing much. During the whole continuance of the war, the Emperor never granted himself necessary rest and recreation. His unceasing activity did not even spare the physicians a few minutes for a morning visit, and one day, when Mandt entered the Imperial cabinet, even before he could inquire after his health, he received the usual standing answer—"All right; besides, I have not time to be ill." And yet this giant frame had been long inwardly undermined. For years past, the Emperor was in the habit of using, in slight attacks of illness, Mandt's common prescription of *nux vomica*, without asking the advice of his physicians. The strength of his mind and will, however, was seldom impaired by bodily suffering. At this moment he was wholly

absorbed in the feeling of his duty as an absolute monarch, and thus in his energy he forgot that he was in his fifty-ninth year, an age that none of his brothers or male predecessors had ever reached. The first week of Lent arrived, and the Court did not, according to their wont, proceed to the Anitschkow Palace,—a striking proof that the Emperor felt ill, though, as had often previously been the case, he disdained to admit it. In the capital, in emulation of his own example, the most zealous energy prevailed, and the most spirited and willing self-sacrifices for the war. Not only were the most distinguished ladies of the society occupied in providing winter clothing and nurture for the distant soldiers, but enormous sums were also collected and sent off to the camp. The serfs offered their few rubles for the common weal, and opulent families imposed on themselves privations of every kind. The "Butter-week," usually so full of excitement, passed now almost unremarked. On February 8th, N.S., the Emperor was first attacked by influenza, from which the whole town was suffering. He did not pay the smallest attention to the malady, but continued to work the same, day and night, and attended the Easter mass, standing all the time. On February 21st he resolved to inspect the troops about to march. This Mandt opposed in the most decided manner, but remarked, with surprise and infinite annoyance, that his medical influence was no longer what it once had been. He begged permission to call in another physician, Dr. Karell, to consult with him. This gentleman, formerly an army surgeon, often

applied to Mandt in difficult cases, who placed the same confidence in his colleague as in himself. Karell said to the Czar, "I would not allow any common soldier to leave the hospital were he as ill as your Majesty." Nicholas replied, "Gentlemen, you have done your duty; permit me to do mine." At one o'clock he drove away in his usual clothing, in 23 degrees of cold, to the Riding School; from thence to the Grand Duchess Helene; and, in spite of the fever that made him shiver, he paid a visit also to the Minister of War, who was ill. He, moreover, transacted business the same day with his son Constantine, who, in his capacity of Minister of Marine and High Admiral of Cronstadt, had arrived. His son thought him unwell bodily, but not particularly so, and in mind as animated and vigorous as usual. Among other things, he laid before his father a packet of foreign newspapers, in which the inimical tone against Russia had yielded to a more calm and impartial mood. Scarcely would the Emperor believe that, at this time of excitement, people should be daring enough to express publicly other opinions. In the course of conversation he recalled many distant friends of his family, and enjoined on Constantine to write and greet them cordially from him, so his son drove back the same evening to Cronstadt, without the slightest presentiment that he had worked with his father for the last time. The Emperor slept the greater part of the night, but felt worse next morning, though he drove notwithstanding, by ten o'clock, to the Exercise House. But from that day even his iron will could no longer

withstand the inevitable course of nature. This was his last drive. Next morning, even the strength to attend mass failed him, and now he himself admitted that he was ill; for he placed his religious duties even above the worldly ones of an autocrat. On the following day he silently consented that all the duties of government should devolve on the heir-apparent. From that moment he lay on his camp-bed, covered by a soldier's cloak, and in the same even temperature as before. His great danger was no longer a secret, and the physicians watched his state with Argus eyes. But destiny mocks all human foresight. News of the victory of the Turks at Eupatoria arrived, inflicting on the patient, stretched on a sick-bed, deep wounds that no physician could heal. Mandt had hitherto declined any assistance from his colleagues, and the circumstance of his now wishing for their advice unasked was not unremarked in the Winter Palace. The Emperor prohibited alarming the town and the kingdom by public reports of his condition. Thus even Constantine heard nothing in Cronstadt of the illness of his father. The first half of the ensuing week passed without any essential change in the state of the patient. The Empress saw her husband every day, indeed, every hour, and he had still sufficient strength of will to conceal his weakness from her. As he had not partaken of the Holy Communion in the first week of Easter, Alexandra asked him, in the second, whether he wished to do so, as there were many instances of a patient recovering strength after this sacred rite. The Emperor declined, because he wished

to receive it only standing before God's altar, and not lying in bed. On Wednesday evening, the last day of February, the physicians gave up all hope of his recovery, without, however, saying so to any of his family. Constantine, who had again come over from Cronstadt on the Wednesday, stood transfixed with horror when he heard that he could not even see his father, far less speak to him. Mandt, however, on Thursday no longer delayed informing one of the most important persons at Court of the approaching end of the Emperor, and thus enabled the Priest Bajanof not to leave him from that moment. As Mandt was also physician to the Empress, he esteemed it his duty to beg her to see her husband as little as possible on this day, because it would be decisive. She was thus prepared at any moment to hear the worst. Till six o'clock in the evening the physicians consulted among themselves to find means to prevent apoplexy. What the one proposed the other objected to, and the dreaded casualty had taken place when the two doctors again saw the patient, between six and seven o'clock. Mandt now assembled the whole Imperial family, but would not as yet announce plainly to the sufferer his approaching end. And yet he had been previously exhorted by him to let him know the time when death became inevitable. About ten o'clock in the evening, Mandt said to him that a true and sympathetic friend of his family wished to see him, and although access to him was prohibited, even to his family, he could not refuse admission to the person in question. "Who is it?" asked the Emperor calmly. "Your confessor, Bajanof,"

was the answer. "You mean then to say that I must die, and have only time left to make my confession?" He raised himself in bed, and looking at the physician with the whole strength of his will, he said, "Say plainly whether I must die." "If the illness does not yield to our efforts," replied Mandt, "this must too surely and too soon be the case." In the course of a few seconds the dying monarch stretched out his hand to the doctor, and said, "I thank you; I now know what awaits me. Spare the Empress as much as you can in telling her this intelligence, and summon the heir-apparent." After these sad words, the acute and observant Mandt did not remark the slightest change in the Emperor's face—at most, only quiet resignation to the inevitable. He withdrew, and found the anteroom filled with anxious faces, to whom, with the exception of the heir-apparent, he was obliged to refuse admittance. Mandt felt as if the ground were giving way under his feet, and those standing round were seized with alarm and horror. It was a solemn moment, when the dying father committed to his son, for his inheritance, the burden of a world and an unfortunate war; but it seemed also as if the Emperor's strength rose superior to this.

Then the Empress came in, with the priest Bajanof. The latter had been known to his sovereign for one-and-twenty years; he had a grave, open, good countenance, and was about the same age as the Emperor, and, like him, energetic, simple, and devoted to his profession. The Empress, in this the most terrible moment of her whole life, displayed the angelic tran-

quillity of mind that was her most precious treasure, and Christian submission to the will of the Most High. During the ensuing holy rite, alone with the priest, the dying man, with complete consciousness, showed the inward grandeur of his character. He had already resigned his earthly power. Divested of all outward pomp, he lay helpless; but his great and noble heart, the holy altar of his kingdom, still beat warmly, and his mind was clear. He now appeared in all his true greatness. Undismayed, as he had ever been through life, he looked forward with faith to a future world; while his thoughts of the present were devoid of all hatred, and full of the warmest love. He spoke to each of his dear ones in turn—to his children, grandchildren, and relatives, and to his household. To his kingdom he bequeathed memorable words; and a blessing from his lips rejoiced those around him. "Why cannot I die with you?" exclaimed his deèply agitated wife. "You must live for their sakes," said he, pointing to his family. "Remain united by the bonds of love, as you have ever been." Then clasping the hand of Alexandra, and turning his eyes on her, he said, "When I first saw you, my heart said, Here is the guardian angel of my life; and such you have been to me: be so to these also."

After this solemn leave-taking of his family, arrived letters, far on in the night, as if by a decree of the Highest, from his two sons, Nicholas and Michael, from Sebastopol. "They are well," cried he; "I care for nothing else now." The telegraph, the same night, conveyed to the Crown Princess of Würtemberg the

blessing of her dying father, who however also thought of the kingdom he was about to leave; he bade farewell to Moscow, and sent the message to Kiew and to Warsaw—"The Emperor lies at the point of death." He also summoned to his bedside the Court minister, Count Adlerberg, Count Orlof, and the Minister of War, Prince Dolgorucki, and thanked them for their faithful services, recommending them to his successor, and desiring them to thank, in his name, all the other ministers and the heroes of Sebastopol, his generals, his army, and to greet his kingdom for him. Before his last strength abandoned him, he called in his whole household, both that of the Empress and his own. He said to Frau von Rohrbeck, "Bid farewell to my much-loved Peterhof for me." Even the grey-haired grenadiers, the sentinels of the Winter Palace, came to his bedside, and, with tears in their eyes, saw for the last time their dying master. After he had blessed and dismissed them all, he asked the doctor, with the cordial sunny expression he reserved for his friends, "When am I to be released?" "Not quite at once," answered Mandt calmly. Nicholas turned to his successor: "I wished to bequeath to you a well-ordered, peaceful kingdom, but it has pleased Providence that it should be otherwise. I can now only pray for you and for Russia." His last words were spoken in fainter tones; they were in allusion to Frederick William the Fourth. Now began the prayers for the dying. The departing soul followed them with evident consciousness, made the sign of the cross, stretched out his feeble hand to his confessor, and then to his wife,

grasping her hand with a final effort, and turning his dying eyes on the angel of his life. The clock struck twelve. It was Friday 2d March, N.S., 1855. Twenty minutes passed before the calm, mild eyes closed for ever, when the dead hand fell from that of the Empress. The Emperor's heart was broken. Solemn stillness prevailed in the death-chamber, where all were kneeling, absorbed in heartfelt prayer. At last, amid a passion of tears that relieved their oppressed hearts, they rose. Alexandra remained for another hour in prayer beside the corpse, till her strength failed, and she was carried to her cabinet.

At midnight the news of the immediate danger of the Emperor penetrated into the higher circles of the capital; and many, even in the dark night, repaired to churches and priests to have masses said for the preservation of their sovereign. In the morning, the Winter Palace was surrounded by kneeling crowds; and while the mute telegraph conveyed the mournful intelligence to Europe, the gloomy tone of the death-bell announced the solemn event to the most distant parts of the city. Before the winter sun had set, the sad tidings had reached every European capital. The event occurred so unexpectedly that many attached no belief to it, especially as it came from the East to the West, and thus reached most places sooner than the hour of his death announced from Petersburg. It was the most startling and most affecting occurrence of the whole century; and, for those in the vicinity, still more incomprehensible than to those at a distance, from the circumstance that the Empress, who had been a suf-

ferer for twenty years, survived such a Colossus of health and strength. The universal sympathy and regret, both of friend and foe, loudly proclaimed that the first and greatest man of his day was dead. Even those were deeply affected and stunned, on the evening of this day, who the same morning had railed in hard terms against his ambition, and who now were obliged to own that, even as their enemy, he had been worthy of admiration. Just as, thirty years ago, Alexandra had been snatched within two days from the secluded Anitschkow Palace to the throne, so by an equally sudden change the happiness of her life vanished in two days; and if formerly she required strength to bear the load of felicity, she now, in mature age, needed still greater energy not to sink under the burden of misery. She now saw one Court vie with another in sympathy, expressed through their ambassadors, and how much Europe had lost in the man by whose side she had been the happiest wife in the world during eight-and-thirty years.

While the mother and the children wept beside the coffin of the husband and father, the capital and the gigantic kingdom mourned their head, the army its leader, the land, encompassed with foes, their protector, the nation its ornament and greatest treasure. How many thousand hopes had vanished! how many props broken down with him! But whereas, after Alexander the First's death a coffin stood on the throne, and the kingdom was two whole weeks without a ruler, now the heir-apparent had been long prepared to take the burden on his shoulders, and the mourning nation

turned its eyes with hope to his great and noble heart. Like his father, he ascended the throne under the most disconsolate circumstances, and storms from without, and a new era began for the kingdom. In the last hours of his life, Nicholas named the spot where he wished to lie in the Fortress Church. The same funeral rites were repeated that we already described at the interment of Alexander. The young Emperor Alexander, after performing the last duties to his father, turned his care and attention to the war.

The capital was now inflamed with hatred against the late Emperor's body physician, which increased the legion of those who envied and were hostile to him, to such an extent, that he could no longer remain in the place where, for twenty years, he had laboured so effectually. The medical profession, by his means, attained the same respect in Russia as in other countries. After the interment of Nicholas, his testament was opened and made public. It is the bequest of a father to his family, and to near and distant friends; the autocrat disappears; the man, the Christian alone speaks. It was written on Ascension Day, 1844. The illness of his daughter Alexandra, which at that time caused uneasiness in the capital, may have caused him to make this will before his journey to England. He was at that time forty-eight, the same age at which his brother Alexander died; this fact also seemed not to have been indifferent to him. He does not express himself as an Emperor, gives no orders, but declares his wishes and requests to his successor. In Russia, the fulfilment of the wishes

of the dying is considered a sacred duty, and in this sense the survivors accepted his testament. First of all, he desires that his widow shall continue to enjoy the same personal property as before; he appeals to the hearts of his children and grand-children, to honour her as the head and centre of union of the family, to promote her peace of mind, to anticipate her wishes, and to cherish her age with tender care, and to ask her counsel and blessing on every undertaking. He distributes the simple adornments of his cabinet to his various sons, and also names the different Summer and Winter Palaces they are to inhabit. The youngest son to remain in entire dependence on his mother, till he comes of age. After all family questions are settled, he remembers his household servants, and all those officials who have so faithfully administered his private fortune since 1817. Not one of these had been superseded in his office, except House-marshal Narischkin, to whom we alluded in our first volume. He proceeds to name, with sincere gratitude, those men who had helped him to bear the heavy burden of his reign. He specially names Count Adlerberg as the one truest and dearest friend of his life, and also his sister, Countess Julie Baranof. Owing to the position of Frau von Adlerberg, the brother and sister became acquainted with Nicholas in his childhood. In the will are the following impressive words:—"I have loved Adjutant-general Adlerberg like my own brother, and I hope to find in him, to the close of my life, an unchangeable and true friend. His sister, Julie Feodorowna Baranof, has educated my three daughters

with the anxious care and fidelity of a relation, and I thank her for her sisterly love." He also gratefully acknowledges the services of all those persons employed in the education of his children, whom he adjures to continue to love and honour their instructors, and to provide for their future welfare, and also for that of his physicians, confessors, and others in his personal service. He devotes a special paragraph to those on whom devolved the greater portion of the government of the Empire. These are all well known to the reader, but we give their names in the order in which the Emperor wrote them down. "Prince Peter Michaelowitsch Wolkonsky, who, in spite of his advanced age, has toiled for me and my family with unchangeable zeal and faithful devotion." In expressing his gratitude to Prince H. Wassiltschikof, he says, "I entered the service under his orders; he has always been my friend and adviser, and latterly my trusty help in State affairs." He thanks Field-marshal Prince Paskewitsch for his faithful friendship, and also for the heroic deeds by which he raised the fame of the Russian arms; then follow the names of Counts Orlof, Benkendorf, Nesselrode, Kankrin, Bloudof, and Kisselef, and Princes Tschernischef and Menschikof. When, however, this will was opened, many of these had been long dead, such as Wolkonsky, Wassiltschikof, Benkendorf, and Kankrin. Others were in feeble health, and no longer capable of taking office, like Tschernischef. The Emperor also thanked his trusty Guards, who, in 1825, saved the valiant army and fleet of Russia; he adds, "I loved them like my

children, and strove, so far as I could, to improve their condition; if I have not succeeded in doing all I could wish, it has not been from the want of good will." Recurring to his family and relatives, he says of the Grand Duchess of Weimar, Maria Pawlowna, "I honoured her like a mother, and always told her the whole truth from the depths of my soul. I repeat my heartfelt thanks for the happy moments that I have passed in her society." Of his brother Michael, he says, "He is an example to you of how brothers should act towards each other." He also refers to his children and grandchildren, exhorting them to serve the Emperor faithfully to their last breath, and to be a shining example to all other subjects; finally, he thanks all who have loved him, and forgives his enemies; he asks forgiveness from all whom he may have unconsciously injured, adding, "I was a man, and therefore not without many weaknesses; I have always earnestly striven to master these; I succeeded with some, but not with others; I therefore sincerely implore pardon." He begs the survivors to pray for the peace of his soul, and submits, in all humility, to the will of God.

Distant Europe, in the year 1825, saw him emerge out of the darkness like a pillar of light; it paid him the tribute of admiration and gratitude when he chivalrously raised his sword against Turkey, and was inflamed with hatred against him when he overthrew the rebellious Poles. The opinion of the world is as changeable as a weathercock, but true greatness remains the same, and his courage, his spirit, his heart, and his despotic will, as well as his lofty character, and the

energy of an autocrat, for thirty years continued unaltered; his bodily strength alone decayed in latter years, though not visibly, and an excessive strain on his powers prostrated him at last. He created his world according to his own ideas, his own laws, and his own strength. He was the most chivalrous husband ever seated on a throne, the most affectionate father to his family, the most upright ruler of his subjects, the acknowledged umpire in the Europe of that period, the terror of the wicked and of his foes, the sure refuge of his allies and supporters, a friend in need, a comfort to the forsaken; a *thorough* man, a consummate autocrat. He died as grandly as he lived, with the conviction of having fulfilled his duties; like the last republican, Cato, he only called those free who loyally performed their obligations. Unfettered by the prejudices of society, he regarded all his subjects with the same impartial feelings; he valued neither birth nor title; services and merit alone, and the rank and position that each won for himself, weighed with him. He commissioned Prince Metternich, in Vienna, to bestow the highest Russian order, in his name, on the grey-haired Radetzky. Metternich replied, that Radetzky's descent was not sufficiently ancient or illustrious to lay claim to such a distinction. "It is not a man's ancestors for which I esteem him, but for his own merits," was Nicholas's answer. At various epochs of his reign, he introduced the question of the manumission of the serfs in the Council of the Empire, and as he encountered the opposition of the nobles, he endeavoured to ameliorate their lot by laws and his

own protection. Six weeks before his death, a serf who had been maltreated took a terrible revenge on his master; the Emperor, in the midst of his preparations for war, exclaimed, "and such nobles oppose my warmest wishes!" The historical figure of Nicholas resembles those lofty mountains, from the base of which the pilgrim can neither ascertain their height nor their circumference, their vastness and effect becoming more prominent the farther you recede from them.

CHAPTER X.

THE WIDOWED EMPRESS.

THE Empress now entered the last phase of her eventful life, and as the crescent of the waning moon gradually pales, thus in mature age she was reminded of the days of her early youth. She had lost her husband amid the storms of war, as she had lost her mother formerly amid the pressure of strife and adverse circumstances. She was at that time the affectionate consoler of her widowed father, and now she was the tie to which the surviving family clung. Little alteration was made in the domestic life and former arrangements of the Winter Palace; each remained in his own abode, and all now, as formerly, went to see their beloved mother at the same hour. In the course of a few days arrived her daughter Olga, the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg, herself for years a widow, and Prince Charles of Prussia. Even before the Emperor's death the Empress had often been attacked by palpitation of the heart, which now never left her day or night; and it was not strange that this sufferer for twenty years should wish to follow her deceased husband. She was now in a state of perpetual faintness and weakness, and the thought alone, that she

was bound to live as head of the survivors, gave her strength to endure her unutterable sorrow. Three physicians were occupied with her, and a fourth was sent for from Moscow. Time alone could procure any alleviation for the mourner, and her nearest blood relations were with her the whole day, and bestowed the utmost care on her. In the evenings, from eight to ten, the entire family assembled in her cabinet, and when they separated to go to rest, the young Emperor began to work afresh, even beyond his strength, and the blessing of his mother followed him. In the capital, the most absurd rumours were circulated as to the death of Nicholas, but the reverence he so well deserved was also loudly proclaimed in all circles of society. During the death-mass for him, in the Moscow Ascension Church, one of the bells of the Iwan Weliki fell with a crash, killing several persons on the spot, injuring many others, and sinking deep and fast into the ground. The lamenting people did not take this incident in the light of an evil omen for the new reign, but as a symbol of the terror that had seized the kingdom.

The whole town congregated in the Winter Palace once more to see the corpse of their great Emperor, and the usually lively public appeared all in black in the streets in the deepest mourning. Even in Berlin the theatres were closed for three days, and, besides the Court mourning, four weeks of mourning were ordered for the army and navy, and the Royal Family attended the death-mass, held in the Russian ambassador's hotel at Berlin. In a distant German city, where the Em-

peror had never been seen, a ball was postponed on account of his death; a pastor in a mining district wrote for his people an account of the life and virtues of the deceased as a ruler.

The obsequies followed with quiet solemnity, in compliance with the wish of the late Emperor, in the Fortress Church, which lies on the opposite bank of the river on the Petersburg Islands. The pilgrim sees only the different sarcophagi, where, in a deep grave, repose emperors and empresses, the names inscribed on each. After the interment of Alexander the First and Elisabeth, the kingdom looked forward to happy events and to the coronation in Moscow. But when Nicholas's body sank into the grave, all eyes were directed with equal anxiety towards the South, as well as the North, to the Black Sea as eagerly as to the Baltic; the kingdom was threatened from without on all sides, and within it was an excited warlike camp. For Alexandra, the sun of her life had gone down, and instead of the enjoyment of the mild blush of evening, a violent storm burst forth. Lonely Zarskoe-Selò was now to her a desolate wilderness. Her eldest son, the Emperor, lived in the old palace apart from his mother; her second son, Constantine, was in Cronstadt; her two youngest, farthest away of all, in the Crimea, at the other end of the kingdom. Adjoining the cabinet of the Empress-mother, and only divided from it by a narrow corridor, was the cabinet of the deceased, empty and deserted; and on the other side, her rooms adjoined the death-chamber of her late daughter Alexandra. A drive through the gardens led her past

the lifeless marble statue of her daughter, and showed her the still vigorous charger that had carried her husband, and followed him when in his coffin to the grave. A thousand memories awakened in her pain and grief, and both the near and distant warlike camps augmented her anxieties.

The Court now proceeded to the Emperor's favourite resort—charming Peterhof. The widowed Empress had often spent the autumn in Zarskoe-Selò apart from her husband, as his journeys into the interior of Russia took place at that time; but to Peterhof both had always travelled together in the same carriage, and out of tender consideration for his wife, Nicholas had constructed a highway. Now, she came alone to the desolate small house, and instead of former splendours and joyful fêtes, she found Cronstadt, and indeed Oranienbaum, both in her near vicinity, menaced by inimical fleets, and the sorely tried mother knew that her son was exposed to their fire. Formerly, hundreds of thousands flocked from the city to see the beautiful park glittering with thousands and thousands of gay lights; now, the uneasy but curious crowd hurried past Oranienbaum, and gazed at the floating fortresses of the enemy, every moment expecting fireworks, the thunder of which would rend the air even as far as the Winter Palace, while both the Court and society felt as if the sword of Damocles were suspended over their heads. The saddest news from the far South alarmed all hearts, and Alexandra, in Peterhof, passed the same miserable time as her mother fifty years before in Memel. We need not inquire which of these illus-

trious women had most to suffer; let us rather admire the spiritual strength of both, the quiet womanly dignity with which they bore the burden of misfortune. Alexandra had the courage to hear the details of the fall of Sebastopol. A blow to the whole kingdom; but the military honour of Russia gained more by it than did that of the conqueror. The gentle heart of the widowed lady had still tears for a number of families, whose sons there found a hero's death. There died Nachimof, Kornilof, Istomin, and also one of the Barons Meyendorf, and Count Wielhorsky. The fatherland lost not only tried heroes, like the four first named, but was also deprived of many youths who had justly inspired great hopes for the future.

Immediately after this catastrophe the young Emperor Alexander went to Moscow, and having first strengthened himself and his people by prayer in the bosom of the Holy Church, he hastened southwards. There the war continued to rage unceasingly; and, almost within sight of the youthful monarch, Kinburn was forced to surrender to the tremendous fire of the implacable enemy. The nation was fully prepared to hear that the whole population of the country must be called to arms; for Russian courage and enthusiasm only increased with every disaster of the war. An early and severe winter, however, prevented all further enterprises; and towards Christmas negotiations for peace commenced. In those troubled days, Alexandra made the painful discovery that many persons attached to her Court had forsaken her for the new one, while she in her upright nature had hoped for

faithful, enduring friendship. But she found others who devoted themselves with the utmost loyalty to her service. She passed the winter without leaving her cabinet, in a state of extreme exhaustion in the circle of her children, who, from the Imperial couple downwards, all cherished her with their former love and tenderness.

A new day had dawned for the Empire, and created a new world round Alexandra; her sole possessions in it being her family and her distant foreign relatives. Her life was chiefly absorbed in reminiscences of the past, for she had no strength for the present. Many of the most devoted servants of the late Emperor withdrew like her from the stage; Count Nesselrode resigned the office he had filled for four-and-twenty years to Prince Alexander Gortschakof, and though still active for his years retired into private life. Alexandra knew him in 1813, before she had seen her future husband. Set free now from business he visited the cabinet of the august lady oftener than before, and of all guests was the most welcome. Baron Meyendorf, Count Ribeaupierre, and Counts Sumarakow and Wielhorsky, too, were less engaged in business, and could thus spare more time to the widowed Empress. The conversation of these men was intellectual and instructive both to mind and heart. Her oldest friend, Countess Sophie Bobrinsky, quitted Petersburg after sending her three sons to take part in the war for their fatherland, and saw them all return crowned with laurels. The two daughters of her friend Cecilia were now her maids of honour; and among the elder ladies,

Countess Baranof and Countess Tiesenhausen still stood by her side. When, after a long severance from the world, she once more began to enjoy fresh air, she drove, as formerly, with four horses, and the same Cossacks who had been seen for five-and-twenty years behind her carriage. Thus the sight of this august lady recalled to the public the days of the Emperor Nicholas. Her outward appearance, since the death of her husband, was altered past all recognition; she could only be known by the angelic sweetness of her eyes and the majesty of her demeanour. This monotonous existence, the chief end of which was to enable her to bear the greatest grief of her life and her bodily sufferings with courage, was brightened in January 1856 by the marriage of her third son, Nicholas, with a daughter of Prince of Oldenburg, named Alexandra Petrowna. It was the first occasion on which a native Russian Princess married a Russian Grand Duke. The young bride, scarcely yet eighteen, had been brought up under the eyes of her admirable mother; and though so nearly related to the most brilliant Court in the world, she was most ingenuous and unassuming. The Empress-mother bestowed her maternal blessing on the young couple, whose union had been prompted by the most heartfelt affection, and said she only wished to live long enough to see her youngest son found a home of his own. This Grand Ducal couple lived in the Winter Palace, in the vicinity of the Empress-mother, cheering and amusing her during many days of severe suffering. When at length the news of peace resounded through all Europe, and after long seclusion

the inhabitants of Petersburg repaired to German baths, Alexandra, too, began to long for change, to escape for a short space from the scene of her lost happiness, and to seek strength for her debilitated nerves, from which she had suffered for years. Her debility was so unexampled, that, on the land journey to Berlin, every moment, it was feared, might be her last. Any reception, therefore, or distinction, such as a guard of honour, was interdicted, and she proceeded as quietly as possible from one city to another. After a fatiguing and troublesome journey she reached Potsdam, her resting-place. She appeared there for the first time as Empress in 1829; now, she returned a widow, and in such a state of utter bodily weakness, that people thought rather of her death than of any cheerful sojourn there. In that year the present Emperor came for the first time to Berlin, as a boy of eleven and heir-apparent; now he was loudly greeted by all Europe, because he had restored peace to a quarter of the globe. Alexandra could only receive her nearest relations, and even the length of these visits was appointed by the physician. In a short time she assembled all her relations round her, and the newspapers spoke of a royal congress. King Frederick William the Fourth dedicated every moment that he could snatch from his affairs with fraternal love and tenderness to his suffering sister; and her brothers, Princes William, Charles, and Albert, vied with each other in their care of the invalid. The natural feeling of relationship brought hither the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg and the reigning Duke, and also Prince

and Princess Frederick of the Netherlands, the Queen of Bavaria, and others, to see their beloved relative. In addition to these, different royal personages appeared, however, many by no means royal, whom the illustrious lady wished to meet again, and the eyes of both mother and son were filled with joyful tears when they saw that true kindness still existed in the world. Dr. Mandt, who had retired from Russia after Nicholas's death, met the invalid Empress-mother in Potsdam, and gave her the benefit of his medical advice as to her further journey. The lamp of her life seemed every moment likely to be extinguished, and yet a pleasing though trying duty still awaited her. It was impossible for her not to appear at her son's coronation, as the Empress Maria Feodorowna had been present at those of Alexander and Nicholas. But where was she to find the strength indispensable for a journey to Moscow, and the fourteen days of the fatiguing ceremony? In Potsdam the physicians at first advised her to go to Wildbad, in Würtemberg, there to acquire more vigour. All who had seen the weakly lady in her bitterest grief were amazed at the resignation she showed amid her sufferings, and at the freshness of mind with which she entered into the pursuits of those around her. The saying of a German philosopher, that the mind refreshes and strengthens the body, proved true in her case. An old family friend, whom the physician allowed to visit her for half-an-hour in Potsdam, was startled on first seeing her; but in the next quarter of an hour, she became more animated and stronger in mind, and passed four hours in interesting con-

versation. Her intellect for ten years past had not aged a day; but her physical weakness compelled her to make frequent pauses when speaking. As in days of old, she interested herself with all her former zeal in history and literature, although she could no longer use her own eyes to read. She seemed, in fact, to find most pleasure in purely intellectual pursuits, which excluded painful remembrances and made her forget her bodily weakness. Her cabinet, however, swarmed with worldly splendours, gold-embroidered uniforms, stars and ribbons, and high dignities and titles, without exciting much interest in her. Indeed, her strength seemed slowly returning, and at Candlemas she could remain for a short time in the open air in the morning, and in the company of her brothers and sisters and two of her sons, dream that old times had returned. Baron Meyendorf escorted her on the journey to the monotonous and somewhat gloomy Wildbad.

She lived there in the Hotel Bellevue, belonging to Count Dillon, which the filial love of her daughter Olga had adorned with the loveliest flowers and shrubs from the Stuttgart orangeries, in order to remind her of Palermo. The ever bright sky of Sicily forms an extraordinary contrast to the dark woods of this mountainous district, and the dusky monotony of the Black Forest; but the wondrous waters soon recalled new life into the apparently dying Empress. At first she visited the little town in a wheel-chair, and was astonished at the festive, gaily decorated spot. After some baths she was able to emerge from her solitude and to enjoy small soirées. A distinguished circle here assembled

to cheer her solitude. We name first Princess Lieven and Prince Woronzof, both robust for their age, and yet the close of their lives was nearer than that of Alexandra, whose days appeared to be numbered. Prince Peter of Oldenburg also remained with her during the whole of her stay, and went on foot with her to visit the hospitals and schools that his mother, Queen Catherine, had established. Besides her relations she also saw Count Nesselrode, who occupied the evening of his active life by making journeys into Switzerland. Here her youngest son, Michael, made the acquaintance of Princess Cecilia of Baden, and their closer intimacy advanced so rapidly that, on July 10th, before his departure for Moscow, their betrothal took place. Since Peter's reforms this was the eleventh German Princess who had married into the Russian Court; at this same period twelve Russian Grand Duchesses had connected themselves with foreign Princes, so that with no other country in Europe was Russia so closely allied as with Germany.

By her four months' stay in German air the physical powers of the invalid were so much restored that she could commence her journey to Petersburg, to attend the brilliant spectacle of the coronation of her son. The solemnity was to be even on a grander scale than thirty years previously. The throne and kingdom shortly before the coronation had been exposed to greater dangers than even now, through the Oriental war. Many families, it is true, still mourned the loss of their sons, fallen in battle for their Fatherland, but amidst their grief they could look forward with pride to the

coronation, for Russia scarcely lost anything in her war with the Western Powers; indeed, on the contrary, she increased her power in Asia by the acquisition of vast tracts of land. The Caravan road, from Orenburg to Aralsee, so long a subject of contention, had been in the possession of Russia since 1853; and this was compensation to the kingdom for the fall of Sebastopol. At the same period two ports of Japan were opened to Russian commerce, and a large district at Amur passed into the hands of Russia. The recent disasters were wholly swept away by such vast national gains. In the rest of Europe also all the wounds inflicted by the war were quickly healed and forgotten, and the young Emperor found only enthusiasm in his people and in foreign countries for himself and his vast and noble projects of reform. The feeble Empress-mother too seemed to revive, and sad memories were superseded by the rejoicings and splendours in honour of her son, who, thirty-eight years previously, first saw the light in Moscow.

The preparations on every side augured that this coronation was to exceed every previous one in magnificence. From Asiatic as well as European States flocked vassals, princes, ambassadors, and special envoys, each of whom strove to display peculiar magnificence. The coronation on this occasion was to be a world-wide event; a festival of peace for all Europe and Asia. Almost every German Court sent Princes of the blood; Napoleon, his trusty friend Count Morny, who had already joined the Court of the Empress-mother at Wildbad; England despatched Lord Wodehouse, the

first of the envoys to tread the Russian soil; and Austria the most powerful of her Hungarian magnates, Prince Esterhazy-Galantha, whose gala costume was valued at many millions. The diplomatic corps numbered 106 persons of every European nation. It is computed that the expenditure lavished by the Crown itself on this coronation exceeded twenty-fold that of Alexander the First, but what the Russian nobility and the foreign ambassadors spent in honour of the event is not included in this calculation. Ancient Rome alone, at the triumphal processions of her Emperors, saw the world assembled in her capital, as the Kremlin now did; but ancient Rome, even in the times of her greatest pomp, could scarcely offer such a picturesque spectacle as Moscow, with its green and red roofs and golden cupolas.

The vigour of Alexandra visibly increased, and she arrived with the young Emperor, her son, in the old coronation city, in crown and mantle, surrounded by the whole family, preceding the young Imperial couple, and after their coronation giving them her blessing and affectionately embracing them. When, at the time of the birth of this very son, eight-and-thirty years ago, she first pressed him to her heart in Moscow, the thought flashed across her that, perhaps, in the never-ending changes of time, he might one day be called on to wear the Imperial crown. At that time, as we know, she herself little anticipated the lot that Providence had appointed for her. What a great moment! She could look back at the thirty years that she had shared with her husband on the throne; and

before her stood her son, with crown and sceptre, the anointed of the Lord, to whom the world looked with hope. She cared little for the joyous excitement in the brilliant city, but her heart was filled with gratitude to Heaven, who had spared her life to enjoy such a moment. Maternal joy in seeing her son crowned Emperor was not, however, alone expressed in her features; they bore traces too of anxiety on account of her beloved child, for no one knew better than Alexandra Feodorowna the heavy burden of the crown that she had helped her husband to bear during thirty years.

The rejoicings and jubilation of this coronation do not belong to our narrative. The Empress-mother now resembled one of those ripe fruits that still hang on the tree as an ornament when a new spring has called forth a thousand fresh blossoms. The physicians soon decreed that she should set off for Nice, where she was to pass the autumn and winter. Her route lay through Warsaw, Breslau, and Dresden. In the latter city she was received by King John and conducted to the hotel of the Russian Embassy, inhabited by the ambassador Herr von Schröder, the Nestor of the diplomatic corps. She was glad to become better acquainted with one so amiable, as hitherto she had scarcely ever met him. He originally belonged to the time of Paul the First, and in him was much that recalled an earlier period; his faithful services and assiduity had extended over half a century, and in experience and worldly wisdom Count Nesselrode could alone surpass him. Next morning Alexandra, escorted by her brother, Prince Albert, visited the Dresden Gallery, for the first time, and

paused longest before the Madonna that forms the chief glory of the collection. "Though born in Berlin," said she, "Dresden has always seemed farther to me than Italy." She accepted an invitation from King John to visit his palace for a few minutes before her departure, but had not strength to ascend the Brühl Terrace.

From Dresden she proceeded to Stuttgart, to see her daughter, the Crown-Princess, and through Switzerland, in the enjoyment of the most charming autumnal weather, to Upper Italy; visited, in passing, the Borromean Islands, of which she had dreamt ever since her youth, and reached Nice, rich in flowers and blossoms, in the beginning of November. Piedmont, so recently an enemy, made every effort to receive her in accordance with her high position. Prince de Carignan accompanied her from Arona to Nice; and in Genoa, where she remained a few days, the King came to the railway station to meet her, assisting her to alight, with the most flattering courtesy. She dined here with the King and the Prince, and her varied information left the most forcible impression on the minds of her companions. She inspected the city during several days, being well acquainted with its history, and also paid a visit at this time to the Duchess of Orleans in Voltri. From Genoa she went by sea to Villa Franca, and thence by land to Nice.

Here the Avigdor Villa, commanding a splendid view of the sea, was prepared for her reception, and there was much that reminded the august lady and her suite of Palermo, three persons being still with her who had participated in her delightful visit to Palermo, Count

Apraxin, Baron Meyendorf, and Countess Tiesenhausen. In Olivuzza she had not enjoyed a view of the sea from her windows, and the profusion of flowers vied with those in Sicily, while in the villa itself a corridor crowded with flowers tempted her to walk in it. Her bedroom was hung with her favourite colour, the blue of the cornflower, and the pure breezes of the adjacent sea penetrated into every room. Russians and English flocked hither, and soon those two foreign tongues predominated in the streets. Before long Alexandra felt as well as in Palermo, especially as regarded that peace of mind, within the last nine years so constantly disturbed by bad news and terrible events. Her mode of living and the arrangement of her day were here the same as ten years ago; she was as much as possible in the open air, avoiding, so far as she could, all gay or exciting society, and occupying every spare moment by historical readings about Italy. She had arrived without a single member of her family, but presently came the Grand Duchess Helene Pawlowna, who intended to pass the winter in Nice, her two sons, Constantine and Michael, and Prince Charles of Prussia. King Victor Emanuel, and likewise Prince von Carignan, vied with each other in their attentions and visits, while a legion of artists sought to excite her interest in sculpture, music, and painting. She listened with delight to the admirable Vieuxtemps, whose tones had formerly been heard in her cabinet at Petersburg. Occasionally Piedmontese bands played in her garden during breakfast, like those of Sicily formerly in Palermo, and the doors were thrown open to all comers.

Otherwise she was entirely estranged from the public, even in the Carnival, which displayed a greater luxuriance of flowers than even Palermo. She did not appear in public, and, following her example, the Russians also seldom frequented the gay scene. When, however, her energies seemed returning, she complied with a request from the town of Nice to show herself to the assembled public. A new high road had been made from Nice to Villa Franca, which was to be opened by the august lady. The new road was marked by a rope drawn right across the street. She appeared in the brilliant assemblage of the municipality and cut the cord with golden scissors, which called forth loud shouts from the people. When, a year later, Russia acquired in the little port of Villa Franca a depôt for coals, Europe looked back with different eyes to this little opening scene. Nice, in that same year, was designated in all the German papers as a political rendezvous, no doubt owing to many political and diplomatic men of mark being collected there, whose names Alexandra at most learned only through the public list of visitors.

She gained far more gratitude than for the performance of this ceremony by her benevolence to the poor, while her womanly cultivation and consummate charm made a deep impression on all who saw her. For twenty years past Russia was more known to the European public through travelling Russians (especially the Imperial family) than by foreigners visiting Russia. The Italian rarely leaves his lovely fatherland, and his knowledge of other countries is very prejudiced. It is not

very long since the Romans and Neapolitans imagined that beyond the Alps there was perpetual snow; that the towns consisted of wooden houses, and the sole civilisation of the Northerners produced by visiting Italy for a year. In 1835 a Roman colonel accompanied the remains of General Mörder (who died in Rome) to Petersburg, and thus became acquainted with several French and German towns. He openly avowed at Petersburg his surprise, nay, his confusion, to find everything so superior to his previous conceptions, and called his journey "the road out of the past into the present." Twenty years later than at Berlin, Rome saw the first gas-lights stream from a palace in the Corso, which the Romans gazed at with the same astonishment as the Northerner feels at an outbreak of Vesuvius. The Empress encountered no further obstacle to her wish to visit the Eternal City, and her ruins and splendid palaces, now all lit up with gas. Although eleven years older, her health was improved since the time when her chief longing was to return to Petersburg. She celebrated in Nice the birth-day of King Victor Emanuel, drank his health, thanked him for his hospitable reception, and only waited for fine weather to set sail for Civita Vecchia. Some days previously the Russian vessels gave the public a fine spectacle,—the squadron, illuminated by Bengal fire going through its manœuvres, and the bands of the Russian ships proving that they far excelled those of the Italians. The departure was afresh delayed by bad weather, and thus the Russian Easter, with all its ceremonies, was kept on board the fleet. At midnight the thunder of cannon proclaimed

its commencement, and on the deck of each ship the crew assembled round an altar for their religious services. Alexandra passed the night in her own private chapel. We know that in Naples also she closed her stay with this celebration.

Two days after she was on her way to Rome in the "Olaf," a Russian steam-vessel. The weather was fine, and the happiness of being so near the fulfilment of the wish she had cherished from her youth upwards deprived her of sleep. Every nerve vibrated when she first caught sight of the grand Dome of St. Peter's on her way from Civita Vecchia to Rome, and she could not suppress a cry of delight when this widowed queen of cities lay before her in all her glorious pomp. Every formal reception, especially a salute of cannon, was forbidden. In an open carriage, drawn by six horses, she drove through the Cavallegiere Gate, paused at the square of St. Peter's and before the Engelsburg, and slowly reached the Corso, stopping at the Rondanini Palace. In the course of successive years Rome sees the *élite* of the whole society in Europe. Crowned heads alone do not come there, and thus the short stay of the Emperor Nicholas twelve years previously, and now the arrival of his widow, was quite an event in the world; for even the first Napoleon never entered the city of the Cæsars and the Popes. Limits, however, were set to the zeal of the illustrious lady, who wished to see and to enjoy everything, not only by her physicians, and the engagements and duties of society, but also by continued bad weather. Next morning came Cardinal Antonelli, in the name of the Pope, to greet

the Empress, but the fatigue consequent on the journey confined her chiefly to her room. She required rest and strength for the next day, when, with her suite, she was to drive to the Vatican, escorted by ten State carriages, to be welcomed by the Pope. In spite of all his infallibility and goodness, Pius the Ninth could not prevent the ancient capital being visited by genuine German April weather,—wind, rain, and hail,—although the orange-trees were in bloom. The Vatican is indeed the only building in Europe that surpasses the Winter Palace in extent and in art treasures; but the household state and the apartments of the successors of St. Peter are very plain and simple compared to those of the northern palace; and the spiritual court of the Pope, in its highest ecclesiastical ornamentation, is modest in comparison with that of Petersburg, and the highest orders of the Russian priesthood. There was nothing here to astonish or surprise the Empress; but her interview of three-quarters of an hour with the Head of Roman Christendom left a deep and lasting impression on both. Ten years previously the Pope called the widowed Queen of Holland a true Queen; of Alexandra Feodorowna he said that she was a true Christian. Pius conducted her through his apartments, of which the "Sala Regia" alone contains frescoes, though of no great artistic value, and the subjects unpleasing to those who are not Roman Catholics. Pius himself was the most interesting object in the Vatican. She felt exhausted after this visit, and required rest, which she found in the society of her brother, Prince Charles, and her daughter Olga. Next morning the Pope re-

turned the visit of the Empress, attended by the whole of his noble guard, appearing before the imperial palace in full pomp. In Rome, usually so grave, a commotion ensued as if the old imperial times had revived, and the Pope hastened cordially to welcome their return. Pius had at that time resolved on a journey to Loretto, but the public opinion was, that out of respect to the Empress he would defer his project till after her departure, but he set out for Loretto soon after this visit. Antonelli, that most delightful of all Cardinals, dined with Alexandra, and charmed her by his intellectual conversation. Unfortunately the weather continued unfavourable, and put a stop to almost every expedition of the northern guests to the environs. The more assiduously did the Empress visit the churches and museums in the city, astonishing the Romans by her taste for art, her varied historical information, and her social charms and simplicity. Her health improved, to the delight of all her friends, and she was now strong enough not only to see everything, but to write down in her own peculiar style all that she had seen. She wished to receive every impression, devoid of all prejudice, and took herself to task on this account in her diary. Much surpassed her expectations, much did not equal them. During the next few years she was in the habit of speaking as minutely of particular pictures and statues as if she were still standing before them. "Allow me first to see with my own eyes," said she to a cicerone, "before lending me yours." The mere exuberant enthusiasm of the moment was as foreign to her as the heartless indifference of many travellers who

are satisfied with having seen what they have previously read about in a book. On the 2d May, favoured by the most glorious weather, she visited the Dome of St. Peter's, accompanied by Prince Charles, her daughter Olga and her husband, and the Crown Prince. She remained there for a long time, deeply impressed by the wondrous sight of the grandest historical spot in the world. But individual portions of the building also excited her interest. Two years subsequently she spoke with enthusiasm of the hour she passed there. "It was neither the distant hills, nor the city with its domes, that so affected me, but the thought, as Schlegel says, that I was standing on the grave of the world: I was equally moved and elevated. The impression on me was probably more profound from seeing Rome at an age and under circumstances when grave earnestness predominates in the soul. Rome is so many-sided, that it equally fascinated and awed my sons in their blooming youth, the Emperor in the prime of manhood, and in the throng of busy life, and myself as a widow. This enduring impression, and the elevated mood of my soul, were rather weakened by my astonishment at finding refreshments prepared for me and my suite on the platform." A still greater surprise was in store for her in finding her own name engraved on a marble slab on the spot where a winding staircase leads to the roof. Almost all the members of the Imperial house were commemorated there. After the departure of the Pope, Antonelli invited the Empress to dine with him in the Vatican; a late hour being purposely named, as she was afterwards to see the Museum of Antiquities in the

Vatican by torchlight. "It was to me like a visit to the world below," she said a year after; "and I could not help involuntarily shuddering when I saw so many forms apparently almost alive in the blood-red light, and yet dead, and heard so many known and unknown names. Many were familiar to me from my youth upwards, owing to my teacher, Hirt; others were revived in my memory; and the various master-works, that I already knew through casts, in their present reality made the impression of living beings on me. In that wondrous company I lingered chiefly with old acquaintances, and more especially with my favourites. It seemed as if I were destined to pass the whole of this evening with silent stony antiquity, for I was detained by a supper prepared for me in the Egyptian Museum. I supped with gods and heroes." She devoted a separate hour to the small gallery of pictures in the Vatican, and studied them quietly without any companions. She thought the portrait of George the Fourth of England, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, almost offensive both to the artist and the spectator, when brought into contact with the *chef-d'œuvres* of the sixteenth century. She often viewed the interior of St. Peter's, and felt deeply the wondrous grandeur of that building. Many Russian artists reside in Rome who had claims on her attention. The Russian Government makes a liberal provision for the best pupils in their academy, to enable them to spend a succession of years in artistic Rome, and places them under the protection of the Embassy, or the guidance of some private art-loving individual. At that time Prince Gregor Wolkonsky, son of the Minister of

the Imperial House, was the Mæcenas of these young artists. This Prince, who had grown up in the Winter Palace, and been educated by Raupach, disdained the usual career of State affairs, and connected his life so closely with art, that he was considered the ornament of the Northern artistic world in Rome. He assembled five-and-thirty Russian artists and their works, presented them to the Empress, and afforded her an opportunity of selecting from so many treasures the best to adorn her private collection. She also visited most of the artists' studios, and her gracious condescension was praised up to the skies by the Romans; in short, she wandered through Rome in every direction like a tourist, thus finding some consolation for the great and irretrievable misfortune of her life. She was not to be deprived either of the grand spectacle of Rome—the illumination of the Dome of St. Peter's. By her wish it took place on the 11th May, an unwonted time, and with a somewhat cloudy sky, which, however, only made the sight more marvellous. The Empress first saw it near, and then at a distance, from Monte Pincio, and could find no words to express her admiration.

Thus Rome formed a bright close to the eventful life of Alexandra; the month of May had not been gracious to the illustrious visitor, but immortal Rome, more enduring and loyal than the capricious weather, added the fairest wreath to her reminiscences. King Louis of Bavaria arrived in the Eternal City towards the end of the Empress's stay, and paid her a visit; and she did not quit the city of the Cæsars without precious tokens of remembrance on the part of the

Pope; two massive mosaic slabs were intended to remind her at the Neva of her visit to Rome; the first represented St. Peter's Church, with all the adjacent buildings, and the second lovely Tivoli; a rosary was hung on each. When far away, the Empress subsequently sent Pius the Ninth a large cross of brilliants. On the 23d May, after a stormy passage, she landed at Turin, and continued her journey thence across Mont Cenis to Geneva. Although an Imperial Highness is a rarity even in petty capitals, in a citizen republic like Geneva it was indeed a novelty. Alexandra, wearied by the journey, resolved to celebrate the Russian Ascension Feast in the chapel of the Grand Duchess Anna Feodorowna, widow of the Grand Duke Constantine Pawlowitsch. This princess had resided for many years alternately in Geneva and Berne, in quiet seclusion; she was much older than the Empress, but in spite of her years active, and still able to enjoy life. Her marriage had not been attended with as happy a result as that of Alexandra, having been divorced from her husband fifty years before, when she sought, in the grand scenery of Switzerland, compensation for what life had denied her. These two ladies had been strangers all their lives, and this was their first brief acquaintance, it might therefore rather be called an eternal farewell than a first welcome. The small Russian suite excited the astonishment of the Genevan Republic by their gold embroidered uniforms, orders, and ribbons, and even by the carriages in which they drove to the Greek chapel; but they were still more surprised at the simplicity and affability of the Empress,

and her keen susceptibility to the beauties of nature. In fine weather, she sailed across the lake to Lausanne, lingering for half-an-hour on the heights, from whence the mirror of the Leman Lake is most brilliant. Thence she repaired to Berne, in order to fulfil a duty of her pious, grateful heart. There, for many years past, reposed in the churchyard her admirable governess, Fraulein Wildermett; she adorned her grave with flowers, shedding tears of sincere gratitude, and lamented not being so fortunate as the Emperor Alexander, who could still embrace his tutor Laharpe. Frederick-William the Third also, after the momentous events of 1814, in the midst of the intoxication of victory, did not forget to visit Mademoiselle de Gillieu, in Colombier, near Neufchatel, the governess of his deceased wife, and he sent her a shawl worn by Queen Louise. From Berne, the Empress continued her journey by Basle towards Germany, and visited, in Carlsruhe, Cecilia, the lovely, charming bride of her youngest son, Michael, and returned by Baden-Baden to Wildbad, which had given her a new lease of life in the previous year.

In the course of the same summer, the young Empress Maria Alexandrowna visited the German baths of Kissingen and Brückenau, where her noble simplicity and grace left a lasting impression. The young Emperor accompanied his wife, and shared her stay in Kissingen, while his youngest brother, Michael, and Princess Cecilia of Baden, stayed with the Empress-mother in Wildbad. In August, Alexandra and the young bridal pair returned to Petersburg, and at the end of the same month she attended the nuptials of her youngest son,

on which she conferred her blessing. The last wishes and the last duties of the mother were fulfilled, all her children were now established in homes of their own, and her benediction bestowed on each and all. She was happier than her own mother, who had not accompanied one of her children to the altar.

She had acquired so much strength during the previous winter, first at Nice and then at Wildbad, that she was enabled to pass the ensuing winter in retirement from the world, in sixty degrees of heat, in the company of books and a few friends. Her stay in Rome and Italy not only supplied her with a rich store of memories for the last years of her life, but also opened to her a new treasure of historical lore. Her family, whose head and heart she was, and for whom, according to the wish of her deceased husband, she still strove to live, frequented her cabinet at certain hours of the day, even more than in former years; four sons and four daughters-in-law, and also the Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaewna, lived under her eyes in Petersburg, and more than double that number of grandchildren bloomed in her late autumn like a reviving spring. She also took the most lively interest in the education of these grandchildren, as well as in that of the rising generation of the kingdom, who had been for thirty years under her protection. When she drove out, it was chiefly to these institutes, and she regularly received the Secretaries of State belonging to them. Her guests at dinner were limited to four or five persons of the olden day, such as Counts Nesselrode, Wielhorsky, Apraxin, Meyendorf, Sumarakof, and Ribeaupierre; the

ladies were Countess Baranof, Princess Bariatinsky, Frau von Sacharschewsky, Countess Tiesenhausen, and Countess Fersen. This last-named lady was daughter of the late Prussian General von Rauch, who had access, during long years, to the family circle of the Emperor Nicholas. As the wife of Count Fersen, who was high in office at Court, no obstacles of etiquette stood in the way to prevent her visiting the Empress in her solitude as often as possible, while her own heart of itself attracted her hither. It lies in the course of human development that the young long to cross the boundaries of their narrow home, while the thoughts of the old love best to revert to the past, where as children they experienced the first happiness of life. Thus the widowed Alexandra saw in the society of Countess Fersen her early and distant home represented. Every winter, the young Empress arranged little musical soirées, inviting those persons most intimate with the Empress-mother; so when she could appear she met her own intimate friends, and felt quite at home with them.

The capital and the kingdom were in a state of most intense excitement this winter, owing to the question of the manumission of the serfs, and in the evening meetings at the Empress-mother's this topic was a constant source of discussion. She herself listened to all opinions and all views with the utmost calmness, as the society consisted exclusively of the most benevolent and experienced men of the land. In her seclusion she accompanied the great work with her most heartfelt good wishes. Once, in a small familiar circle, she said, with her own peculiar gentleness, "Two brothers, the

Emperor Alexander and the Emperor Nicholas, laboured for her half a century at this work; may my sons succeed in accomplishing it." In the May of this year, 1858, Alexandra was spared to see the solemn consecration of the Isaac Church, undoubtedly the most superb monument of Nicholas. Fatiguing as the drive to the city and the ceremony in the church must have been to her in her feeble state, she collected her whole energies, and attended the solemnity, and was fortunate enough to have the most lovely weather.

At that time, Professor Tischendorf, in Leipzig, called the attention of the Russian Government to a treasure in the hands of the monks of Mount Sinai, the oldest Bible codes. This affair did not arouse that interest in the public at large that Tischendorf expected. He found, however, enthusiastic support in his enterprise from the young Empress, and the Empress-mother was much excited when told that this unique work was to adorn a Russian church. But she had not the joy of seeing it with her own eyes, as, though it did arrive in Petersburg a year before her death, she was absent at the time.

The birth-day of the Empress-mother was this year celebrated for the fourth time since the death of her husband, without any reception, and in the most quiet manner; she went to mass, however, leaning on her son's arm, and then drove alone through all the pleasure-grounds of Peterhof, laid out by herself. She remained till the close of August in Peterhof, in glorious weather, secluding herself during the whole of the autumn in Zarskoe-Selò, with only her own immediate

suite, and occupied the days and nights in reading. She was now sixty years of age, and yet her intellect was still as fresh and acute as her heart sympathetic, though her bodily frame was indeed fragile to the uttermost. To pass from one room to another in one degree less of heat sufficed to stretch her again on a sick-bed for weeks. There seemed to be less fear of her catching cold in driving than in the short distance from her room to the carriage. In order in some degree to enliven such oppressive solitude, the Emperor had theatricals once a week, adjoining the cabinet of his mother, and burdened as he was with State affairs, he always enjoyed this evening recreation by her side. An early winter compelled the invalid lady to take refuge in the Winter Palace sooner than her family. And yet fate mocked all human precautions on the subject. She drove there in a well-warmed carriage, but found in her cabinet two degrees less of heat, and was taken ill, though not from the journey, but after a short stay in the palace. The news of Dr. Mandt's death, too, which arrived just at that time, agitated her seriously, and during the whole winter she appeared to be in a dying state. The physicians declared, about Christmas, that she could not recover strength either in the Winter Palace or in Peterhof, but must live in the open air; not near the Gulf of Finland, which in the beginning of May is filled with blocks of ice, but by the Mediterranean, where the orange tree displays simultaneously blossoms and fruit. She was distressed by this verdict, and said, "May I not spend the last days of my life peacefully with my family? 'Oh! I am weary of wandering,'" added she from Goethe's poem. "The dying Emperor enjoined on

me to live for my family, and of course among them, but not forsaken and alone, in distant foreign countries." The thoughts of once more undertaking a pilgrimage found no favour in her sight; she had travelled too much not to know its darker shades, and the sole charm the world now had for her was her family.

Two of her children were indeed absent this winter, for her son Constantine and his wife, on account of health, passed the winter in the East. Princess Lieven, who had been in the habit of writing to her several times a week, and amusing her by these letters, had now been dead two years, and Countess Wielhorsky, whose serious nature had been most sympathetic to that of Alexandra since her widowhood, had been interred at the beginning of the war in the East. Count Michael Wielhorsky, the jovial spirit of the Court and the capital, died during the coronation, at Moscow. So of this distinguished family Count Matthieu alone survived, and he was infirm and feeble. His violoncello, so often heard in the Imperial cabinet, now rested on its laurels; the voice, too, of the charming Pauline von Barthenief was gone, and neither in the Court nor in the city could it be replaced. She had yet another loss to deplore at that time, which did not affect her so far as society was concerned, but was a blow to her watchfulness and care of the educational institutes. As the reader already knows, she was in the habit of receiving once or twice every week a report of her schools through a Secretary of State, and illness never prevented her devoting a couple of hours to this subject. For many years past, the State Secretary, von Hofmann, possessed her full confidence in

this office, and, by his practical acuteness and knowledge of routine, aided in relieving her of part of this laborious task. But at the time when changes occurred in the whole Government, Herr von Hofmann was promoted to a higher post, and his important office was transferred to her former secretary, Herr von Storch, whose father, in the previous century, had been numbered among the intimate friends of the Empress-mother, Maria Feodorowna. Nicholas von Storch formerly travelled with Alexandra as her cabinet secretary, and continued in his new situation up to the hour when, a few days before her last moments, he brought her his reports on her deathbed.

At the end of April the Court went to the country, to Zarskoe-Selò, and in the ensuing month of May, the Empress-mother was able occasionally in fine weather to drive out in an open carriage. She cherished the hope that if a warm favourable summer should ensue, she might reside in quiet and comfort till the autumn in her much-loved Peterhof. On Ascension Day, May 21st, O.S., the temperature was 27 degrees of heat in the shade, and Alexandra acknowledged this day to be as charming, and the air even warmer, than on the previous year in Geneva. A brief delusion! Two days later snow fell as heavily as in the depth of winter, and the sufferer was snatched out of the paradise of her hopes and wishes, and reduced to a more miserable condition of weakness than she had ever known. The physicians now imperatively urged her speedy departure, which took place in June. She first took the waters of Ems, and then passed two months in Switzerland, alternately in Interlaken and Vevay. Here

physically at least she revived, but mentally she did not enjoy the peace that had fallen to her lot two years before in Nice and Rome. It grieved her, as head of the family, not being able to be present at the declaration of the majority of the heir-apparent, celebrated in Petersburg on September 8th, 1859, exactly five-and-twenty years after that of the Emperor. The intelligence reached her in a foreign land that Schamyl, the troublesome foe of the Emperor Nicholas, had been taken prisoner, and conveyed to Petersburg. Though this news must have been cheering to her, shortly before her journey over the Simplon, still she did not find the same old Italy of two years ago. King Ferdinand the Second of Naples, who formerly welcomed her into his states with so much courtesy and hospitality, had died this spring; the bloody battles of Magenta and Solferino disturbed the political equilibrium of Italy; the Duchess of Parma and the Duke of Modena, had also withdrawn into retirement. For the daughter of Frederick-William the Third, and the sister of Frederick-William the Fourth, and the widow of the late Emperor Nicholas, the ground seemed to be rocking under her feet; the new aspect of affairs in Italy, and also in Prussia, formed a novel era for Alexandra, who no longer belonged to it. She met Victor Emanuel for the third time in Genoa, passed a second winter in Nice, which still bloomed in the hands of the King, but left it in the spring, when annexed by France. Her childhood and youth had indeed witnessed changes equally rapid, but for forty years she had studied an unchanged map of Europe. Never in the course of her life had she trodden French soil,

and now she found herself transferred thither, as if by a magic wand. It was not, however, the France of Louis Philippe, nor the France of the Oriental war, but the France whose Imperial Ruler had met the Emperor Alexander in Stuttgart with a friendly pressure of the hand. Alexandra could not quit this portion of France without thanking its sovereign for the health regained in his states. In the May of 1860 she travelled from Nice, by Marseilles, to Lyons, where the Emperor and Empress of the French met her. She warmly embraced the Empress Eugénie, and offered her hand cordially to the Emperor, who next morning conducted his illustrious guest, and Princess Eugénie of Leuchtenberg in a State carriage to the town-hall, where a brilliant *déjeuner* awaited them, and at its close the Emperor Napoleon accompanied his Imperial guest with much courtesy to the railway-station. She shortly after arrived at Wildbad for the third time, and though quite as well as three years ago, she could not conceal from herself a certain degree of discord in her whole soul. Was it a secret presentiment that she had, for the last time, seen the Mediterranean, and the Black Forest, and passed through Berlin to bid an eternal farewell to the invalid King, and all belonging to her? Death could never knock at her door suddenly or unexpectedly, having been for years prepared for its advent, and thus she welcomed every fresh day with fresh gratitude. But on her arrival in Russia, her feelings were very different from those of three years ago, when she returned from Rome, spiritually renovated, with a thousand reminiscences, and arrived from Wildbad accompanied by the young

charming bridal pair. She was welcomed at the station with as much respect and sincere cordiality as formerly in the days of Nicholas; she was much touched by seeing all those assembled there whom she had known to be thoroughly devoted to her for so many long years past; her heart clung with its last strength to those whom she loved, to her family, and the few persons who understood how to appreciate her noble character. She passed the brief residue of this lovely summer in Peterhof, surrounded exclusively by her own family. In her quiet small house she enjoyed the society of the Countesses Catherine Tiesenhausen and Fersen; one of her sons, usually Nicholas, and his wife, and, more especially, her animated daughter-in-law Alexandra Josephowna watched over her with the most touching respect and devotion. As if now conscious that her days were numbered, she occupied herself entirely with family affairs, and her anxious care extended even to her youngest grandchild. The expression of her countenance was that of grave earnestness, and the heartfelt solicitude that inevitably displays itself while great questions are still in suspense. The noble decision with regard to the manumission of the serfs was not as yet spoken, and even the most strong-minded cannot always resist certain doubts. During her short stay at Peterhof, the Emperor and his brother Constantine were obliged to leave her, for the affairs of the kingdom allowed them no rest; they both proceeded to Moscow, followed in the course of a few days by the heir-apparent. At the end of August, N.S., in the most favourable weather, she arrived at Zarskoe-Selò, that she was destined never more to leave. She

had scarcely sufficient energy to cast a glance at the scenery and the gardens, and her strength did not permit her to attend a tilting match that shortly after took place. Her mind, too, was not steeled against sad news, and she was violently affected by the melancholy position of the Royal Family at Naples. "The year 1806 seems revived for the Royal Family, and Sicily now gives them no aid," exclaimed she, in sorrow. Another piece of intelligence soon after caused her the deepest distress, the death of her uncle, the Grand Duke George of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. "I have lost my oldest fatherly friend," said she to one of her companions, bursting into tears; as if the warning of her own approaching end passed like a spectre before her. She assembled round her the same evening the few persons who had known her uncle and appreciated his various talents, and discussed the excellence of the departed in every light. It required no very strong excitement wholly to extinguish her lamp of life, daily becoming more feeble, and yet her peace of mind was constantly troubled. Shortly after the death of her uncle, she was terrified by the heir-apparent having a fall from his horse, and when, on the $\frac{8}{20}$ September, his birthday, was celebrated by a family dinner, she was too weak to appear, and dined in her own cabinet, with only a few persons. But both during and after dinner unusual excitement and restlessness were perceptible in her; a mood she had never previously shown even in the worst misfortunes. Her conversation was fluent, but nervously excited, soon yielding to a state of exhaustion bordering on a swoon. Her guests left her faint and weary almost to death, and their impression

when leaving her was anxious and troubled. In the middle of September, however, Heaven sent as if by a miracle the mildest weather, which for a time revived the poor sufferer, so that she even ventured to make an expedition to the adjacent Pawlowsk. She did not feel weaker from the exertion, but only continued better so long as the fine weather lasted. The *accouchement* of the young Empress was so soon expected that she had remained in her cabinet for several days, so these two highest ladies in the realm could no longer see each other; before the end of the month the mild summer days were suddenly succeeded by winter, thus depriving the Empress-mother of the means of prolonging her life. When she had been eight days confined to her room some one said to Dr. Karell, who since Mandt's death attended her, "What would revive the Empress?" "Light, air, warmth," was his answer; "without these accessories, she must wither away like a plant." These sagacious words were considered a mere form of speech in the physician, and no particular weight attached to them. It is true that for years she had been in a fragile, weak condition, and especially at the period of stormy autumn. The small society who were still in the country at Zarskoe-Selò, those in the capital, and in the two palaces, placed no faith in the physician's significant words, and though evening entertainments were at an end, still no particular concern existed about the health of the Empress-mother. On the 21st September (October 3d, N.S.) the young Empress had a son (the Grand Duke Paul), and the sympathies of society were for the moment

chiefly attracted to the old palace, where the young mother resided. The Imperial family were all, however, in the immediate vicinity of Zarskoe-Selò. On September 30th, the Emperor set off for Warsaw, where he was met by the Prince Regent of Prussia. A week later the heir-apparent also went to Warsaw—a proof that no one was uneasy as to the life of his mother. But as the days began to close in, all the signs of vitality became more feeble in the invalid. The most tremendous tempests raged, while torrents of rain alternated with snow-storms, and for weeks not a ray of sunshine was visible. For the last fortnight the sufferer had not left her sick couch, and Countess Fersen, who watched by her night and day, saw as plainly as Karell that all hope of recovery was at an end. Telegrams were despatched to the Emperor at Warsaw, and to her daughter Olga at Stuttgart, announcing that the precious life of the head of the family was exposed to immediate and inevitable danger. She herself had not the smallest foreboding of her approaching end, and when her daughters suggested that she should partake of the Holy Communion she seemed surprised, and asked, "Am I then so dangerously and seriously ill?" The Priest Bajanof first gave her a cross from Mount Athos to kiss, and then she herself asked for the last consolation on earth. But no complaint of her sufferings, no fears of approaching death were heard; in noble resignation, as she had lived, she awaited the great moment that was to lead her into her ideal world. One wish alone she expressed with intense eagerness, that she might once more see the Emperor, and assemble all those near and dear to her round her death-

bed. For six days before her decease she seldom opened her eyes, but her hearing, even in this death-like lethargic state, was more acute than ever, so that she could distinguish the most cautious step of a stranger in the anteroom. In the enjoyment of entire consciousness, and in spite of her infinite weakness, she wished once more to bestow a parting look on those persons whom she had esteemed through life. But she revived wonderfully on being told that her eldest son was near the capital, and that she should see him in a few hours. Joy roused her to open her eyes once more, and indeed she wished to rise to receive him in more fitting attire, in order to alleviate his anxiety for her life. Her heart beat violently when, at eight o'clock on Sunday evening, October 16, she recognised his step in the distance. Although fatigued by his journey, the Emperor remained all night in tears by the side of his mother. From this moment all her family remained in the palace, and took their places alternately beside her deathbed. On the next day, Monday, 17th October (O.S.), the baptism took place of the young Grand Duke Paul in the most quiet manner, and without any assemblage of people—indeed even the Grand Duchesses were all absent; the young Duchess of Leuchtenberg alone, Prince Alexander of Hesse, and a few of the Court were present. The Emperor gave way to no illusion as to the recovery of his mother; for the lethargy, that she had not sufficient vitality to shake off, lay heavily on her like a burdensome covering, and it was remarked that from to time she tried to express a wish, but that speech would not perform its office. She strove to stretch out her hand as a last farewell to one of the

oldest servants of her suite, but it sank down helpless as if dead. Her daughter Olga and Countess Fersen remained by turns all day by the sick-bed, and the Emperor all night, in spite of the fatigues of business; the young Empress was not yet able to leave her room, but the Grand Duchesses were all there, ready to perform any service.

Since the sudden arrival of the Emperor almost all the persons connected with the Empress-mother's service had arrived from the capital, in order to see their dying mistress, if even from afar, and only for a moment, and thus the large desolate palace became gradually filled in this dreary wintry autumn. On Tuesday, October 18, life seemed in some measure to revive; she recognised those around, and the warmth of her heart was still expressed in her dim eyes.

A mass was held in presence of all the members of the Imperial family for the new-born infant who had been baptized on the previous day, and his cradle decorated with the ribbon of St. Andrew. On the evening of this day a hope arose that the invalid was better; for her sleep had been like that of an angel, and her pulse also beat more strongly. The oldest inmates of the Imperial House knew that she had been more than once in this state of entire exhaustion, and therefore did not easily give up all belief in her recovery. The greater was the alarm when, next day, Wednesday, October 19, about two o'clock in the afternoon, her pulse stopped altogether. An express was sent off to Pawlowsk, where business had taken the Emperor, and about three o'clock all the household were assembled in the adjoining rooms in the most painful anxiety, the

Grand Chamberlain, Count Ribeaupierre, Minister of the Household, and even the most insignificant servants. When Dr. Karell came out of the sick-room, he declared that though the pulse had stopped beating for an unusually long time, still the patient might continue to live in this state from fifteen to twenty hours. The Emperor however did not leave his mother's side for a moment through the night; but at four o'clock in the morning he himself despaired of any improvement, and, in spite of the dark autumn night, he summoned even her youngest grandchildren to her deathbed, while all knelt down and prayed. By eight o'clock every room, far and near, was filled with people, kneeling and praying. The beatings of the pulse became slower and weaker, the eyes continued closed, but the features of the dying woman expressed heavenly repose—indeed glorification. Solemn stillness pervaded the whole assemblage, till at half-past eight o'clock the doctor declared that the last agony had begun. It passed without any struggle; it was the death of a resigned Christian breathing her last so gently that no one was aware of the moment when the light of her life was quenched. Like the sun hidden by clouds before setting, the transition from day to night was imperceptible.

The long-controlled grief of her family now broke forth in a storm of loud lamentations, when the Emperor, kneeling down, kissed the beloved hand, still warm, and desired the rest to do the same. The young Empress also had quitted her sick couch, and hurried early in the morning from the cradle of her youngest son, to pray beside the deathbed of her mother-in-law.

In the busy capital little had been heard of her illness, so people stood confounded when the sudden news of her demise reached them. In the course of a few days the whole city appeared in the deepest mourning, and thousands of tears of regret were shed, for every one felt what they had lost by the death of the Empress-mother.

In a day or two came Princes Charles and Albert, father and son, Duke William of Mecklenburg; and the inhabitants of Petersburg made pilgrimages to Zarskoe-Selò, once more to look at the departed, who lay in state in the chapel of the palace. On October 28th the funeral procession moved towards the city, where access was granted to the public at large to see the remains of the lamented Alexandra in the Fortress Church. The obsequies followed in that church on November 5, attended by the usual ceremonies.

The will of Alexandra contained various wishes that the Emperor and the survivors could not literally fulfil, as she survived her husband five, and her daughter Alexandra sixteen years. She divided her property, her jewels, and all her possessions, with her warmest blessing, among her children and relations; but she also remembered with the most tender consideration all her faithful female servants, the daughters of her friend Cecilia, and also those who had been educated with her sons; the nurses likewise who had tended her during her last illness, the Countesses Tiesenhausen and Fersen, and the pupils of the different institutes under her guidance. She wished her usual apartments in the different palaces not to remain empty, but to be inhabited by her children one year after her death; her birth-

day to be kept as a festival, by benefits to the poor, and by youthful recreations in all her institutions, and indeed one of these schools to spend this day in her own residence in Peterhof. Her diary not to be opened by her family till twenty years have elapsed. The fairest inheritance that she could leave, both to her children and grandchildren, was the lofty noble character, the warm heart that they all possessed, and which she had striven to develop with the solicitude of a mother. We add the conclusion of the testament of the illustrious deceased in her own words, as they may interest the reader :—

" Our earthly being is in the hands of God, and none of us can tell when our last hour may strike. I shall therefore no longer delay, while in possession of full consciousness, and of all my faculties, to express my last wishes in writing for my family. The following arrangements, written by me on separate sheets, and at different periods, are signed with my own hand. All these wishes cannot now be effectual or necessary, for many of my beloved relatives have been interred before me. I often ask myself how it is that a feeble, fragile creature, like myself, has found strength to survive the terrible losses which it has pleased Providence to inflict on me. To the pious care that my children showed towards me in my saddest hours, after the death of my Emperor and inexpressibly loved husband, I gratefully owe not to have sunk under the burden of such an unexpected calamity. Their love has preserved my life, more especially the ever wakeful care and tenderness of my much loved son, the Emperor Alexander. Sustained by such warm filial love, I have been enabled to with-

stand the most terrible strokes of fate, and to survive a husband whose life was my own. From the depths of my heart I thank you, my dear son Alexander, and you, my fondly-loved daughter-in-law, Maria, and all my equally beloved children; your true and honest affection has prolonged my life. May heaven requite you for it a hundredfold, and your posterity also! You will read these lines when I shall be no more; but within me there lives the faith and the conviction that the bonds that have united us and made us cling together here, will not be finally rent asunder by death, and that the blessing of your father, and my own, will follow and shield you through your whole lives. I wish, a year after my death, my family to inhabit my apartments, both in the city and the country, and I hope and believe that the spot where I lived the happiest of wives and mothers, may also one day be the scene of the felicity both of yourselves and your children. When you look from the windows of my cabinet on the Neva, on which my eyes so often rested with delight, then spare a glance to the Fortress Church also, where I shall sleep in peace, and bestow a loving thought on your mother."

THE END.

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